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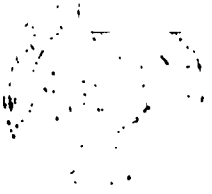

CONGREGATIONAL

SERMONS.

BY

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SERMON I.

OF THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

"For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."—GALATIANS vi. 8.

THE term "flesh" has obtained a wider signification than it previously had; and, corresponding to this, the phrase of our text, "the desires of the flesh" has obtained a proportionally wider range of application. These desires, in fact embrace one and all of the enjoyments which are competent to the natural man while he is in the body. Had the species remained innocent, there would have been nothing, either in these desires or enjoyments, that would have either thwarted the will of God, or carried any forgetfulness or disinclination towards God along with them. But as the matter actually stands, it is far otherwise. With the desire that we have for what is agreeable, there mingles no desire and no liking towards God. With the enjoyment that we have in it, there mingles no remembrance and no pleasure in God. The thing is desired for itself; in itself the heart rests, and terminates, and has full complacency; and the enjoyment is in

every way as much detached from the thought of God, as if the belief of God had no place in his creed, or as if God Himself had no place in creation. Now this is not merely true of the grosser appetites of nature. It is true of every appetite which has for its object something separate from God; of every appetite which points to any one thing that the world has to offer, while God is not recognised as the giver of it, or as having that superior claim upon our affections which the giver has over the gift; of every appetite in the prosecution of which and the indulgence of which, the mind may all the while be away from the consideration of God. Now this applies, not merely to the desires of the epicure, and of the voluptuary. It belongs as essentially to all the other desires of unrenewed nature. There may be as little of God, for example, in the delights of literature, as there is in the delights of sensuality. If it be true that it is He alone who doeth the will of God that endureth for ever, the one may be as little connected as the other with the eternal life of our text. Both may be equally fleeting in their duration; and both may pass away with the vapour of our present life, when it passeth away. They may end when the body ends; and thus it is, that many generous as well as many grovelling desires, that the propensity of the heart to power and glory or to the objects of lofty ambition, may, as well as the lowest propensities of our animal nature, come under the brief but comprehensive description of "the desires of the flesh."

Recollect then that in this extended sense, we

employ the term flesh throughout the whole of our discourse. All the desires which it is competent for a man to feel, who has no care, and takes no interest about the things of God or of another world, are the desires of the flesh. All the enjoyments of which man is capable, apart either from the duties or the delights of religion, are the enjoyments of the flesh. They may or they may not be the enjoyments of a shameless and abandoned profligacy. The line of demarcation between flesh and spirit, is not that by which the dissipations of life are separated from its decencies—but that by which all the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of our present life, in sense and in the creature, but apart from God, is separated from the desire that we have towards the enjoyments of the spiritual life with God in Heaven. A man may be wholly occupied with the former desire, and be wholly devoid of the latter—in which case he is of the flesh and not of the spirit; or, to make use still more of the phraseology of scripture, he is carnal and not spiritual; or he walks by sight, and not by faith; or he is one of the children of this world, and not one of the children of light; or, finally, he minds earthly things, and neither his heart nor his conversation is in Heaven. Now to answer this description of character, it is not necessary, that he should be immersed in vice and in voluptuousness. He may recoil from these; and yet the world in some other of its varieties may have the entire mastery of his affections, and it be the alone theatre of his hopes and his interests and his wishes. What the earthly thing is which engrosses him, we

may not be able to specify; and yet it may be very sure that earthly things are all which he minds, and that to the pleasure and the pursuit of them he is wholly given over. In the judgment of an earthborn morality he may not be at all criminal; and yet, in his tastes and tendencies and practical habits, he may be altogether carnal.

The next thing which requires to be understood, is what is meant by "sowing to the flesh." Let it be observed then, that the act of indulging its desires is one thing, and that the act of providing for the indulgence of them is another. When a man, on the impulse of sudden provocation, wreaks his resentful feelings upon the neighbour who has offended him, he is not at that time preparing for the indulgence of a carnal feeling; but actually indulging it. He is not at that time sowing, but reaping, such as it is, a harvest of gratification. But when instead of tasting the sweets of revenge, he is employed in devising the measures of revenge, and taking counsel with the view of putting some scheme of it into operation—he is no doubt stimulated throughout this process, by the desire of retaliation; but it is not till the process has reached its accomplishment, that the desire is satisfied. It is thus that the sowing and the reaping may be distinguished from one another. We are busied with the one, when busied with the preparatory steps towards some consummation which we are aiming at; and we obtain the other in the act or consummation.

This distinction may serve to assist our judgment, in estimating the ungodliness of various characters.

The rambling voluptuary, who is carried along by every impulse, and all whose powers of mental discipline are so enfeebled that he has become the slave of every propensity, lives in the perpetual harvest of criminal gratification. If with him the voice of conscience be ever heard, amid the uproar of those passions which war against the soul, it only serves to darken his intervals of vice—when, on the assault of the next temptation, and the coming round of the next opportunity, it is again deafened and overborne as before, amid the mirth and the riot and the recklessness of profligate companionship. It is not to such a man, that we should look as our best example of one who sows. We should rather look to another who is equally immersed in vice, but with more of steadfastness and self-command in the prosecution of it—who can bring intelligence and cool deliberation to bear upon its objects—who can patiently take his stand; and calculate upon his advantages; and, after the disguise and preparation of many months, can obtain the gratification of an unhallowed triumph over some victim of artifice. To the eye of the world, and with the general decency of his regulated habits, he may have a more seemly character than the unbridled debauchee. But if to disobey conscience, when scarcely heard amid the ravings of a tempest, be a humbler attainment in the school of impiety, than to stifle conscience in the hour of stillness and circumspection—if it be not so hardy a resistance to the voice of duty, when she calls unheeded along with a crowd of boisterous assailants, as when, with the cool and collected energies of a mind at leisure,

she is firmly bidden to the door—then, though both these wretched aliens from God be surely posting to the place of condemnation, if there be degrees of punishment in hell, even as there are degrees of glory and enjoyment in heaven, we leave the question with yourselves, whether he in the present instance who has most been occupied in sowing, or he who has most been occupied in reaping, shall be made to inherit the deepest curse, or have the heaviest vengeance laid upon him.

But it is more useful still, to contemplate this distinction in the walks of reputable life; and for this purpose, we may notice a very frequent exhibition of it among the members of a prosperous family. A daughter, whose whole delight is in her rapid transitions from one scene of expensive brilliancy to another—who sustains the delirium of her spirits among the visits, and the excursions, and the parties of gaiety, which fashion has invented for the entertainment of its unthinking generations—who dissipates every care, and fills up every hour, with the raptures of hope or the raptures of enjoyment, among the frivolities and the fascinations of her volatile society—She leads a life, than which nothing can be imagined more opposite to a life of preparation for the coming judgment or the coming eternity. Yet she reaps rather than sows. It lies with another to gather the money which purchaseth all things, and with her to taste the fruits of the purchase. It is the father who sows. It is he who sits in busy and brooding anxiety over his manifold speculations—wrinkled perhaps with care, and sobered by years into an utter distaste for the

splendours and the insignificancies of fashionable life. He provides the elements of all this expenditure, yet in the expenditure itself may have no enjoyment whatever. On all his habits there may be imprinted one unvaried character of regularity —punctual in hours, and temperate in enjoyments, and exemplary in all the mercantile virtues, and with no rambling desire whatever beyond the threshold of his counting-house, and engrossed with nothing so much as with the snug prosperity of its operations. In the business of gain, there is often the ruffling of an occasional breeze; and the one who is so employed is, to make use of a Bible expression, "sowing the wind." In the business of expenditure there is often the fury and agitation of a tempest; and the other who is so employed is, to make use of another Bible expression "reaping the whirlwind." The habit of both is alike a habit of ungodliness. Giddy and unthinking in the latter; but certainly not more hopeless, than the settled ungodliness of the former—where system, and perseverance, and the deliberate application of the whole heart and the whole understanding, are given to the interests of the world—where every thought of seriousness about the soul, instead of being lost for a time in the whirl of intoxicating variety, is calmly and resolutely dispossessed by thoughts of equal seriousness about a provision for the perishable body—where wealth has become the chosen and adopted divinity of the whole life; and, in place of the God who endureth for ever, every care and every calculation are directed to a portion, frail as

our earthly tabernacles, and fleeting as the vapour that soon passeth away.

But there is still another word that needs explanation. The term corruption in this passage is expressive, not of moral worthlessness as it frequently is, but of decay or expiration. The meaning of it here is in precise contrast to that of the term incorruption, in the place where it is said that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Where it stands in this verse, it is expressive, not of a moral property, but of a physical one. The corruption that is spoken of in the text, is simply opposed to the eternal life that is spoken of in the text. It is not here designed to affirm the wrongness of any carnal pursuit, but the instability of its objects. We are only translating the text into other language, when we say that all the harvest which is reaped by him who soweth unto the flesh cometh to an end—whereas he who soweth to the spirit will reap a harvest of pleasures which shall be for evermore. So that the lesson here is quite the same with that of the apostle John "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Now that we have finished these various explanations, the first lesson which we urge from the text, is the vanity of this world's ambition. We are elsewhere told in plainer language, not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world. To gratify our affection for these things, is to reap of the flesh, all which the flesh, even in its most extended sense, has to bestow upon us. To provide

again for this gratification, is to sow unto the flesh. The man sows, when, under the impulse of a desire after earthly things, he plies and prosecutes his measures for the attainment of them. He reaps when he does attain. Were it not for a strange anomaly in the moral nature of man, this distinction could not have been better exemplified, than by him who first labours, with the whole heart and strenuousness of his soul, after the money which purchaseth the objects of this world's gratification; and then gives himself up to the harvest of indulgence. But what mars and confounds the distinction in this instance is, that, when man devotes himself to the acquisition of that money which purchaseth all things, it is not always with the view of purchasing. Wealth is often prosecuted without that view. An independent charm is annexed to the bare possession of it. Apart altogether from its power of command over the enjoyments of life, it has become with many an object in itself of the most passionate and intense ambition. All the pleasure of the chace is keenly felt in the pursuit of it, and all the triumph of a victory as keenly felt in the attainment of it; and this without any regard to that harvest of subsequent enjoyment, into which it has the power of ushering its successful votaries. It is thus, that, although the mere shadow and representative of enjoyment, it has at length infatuated its worshippers into a higher relish for itself, than for all the enjoyments of which it is the minister—so that, instead of a handmaid to the gratification of our other appetites, itself has become with many the object of an appetite more domineering than them

all; and wealth apart from all its uses and subserviencies, now stands to their imagination in the place of a mighty and dispensing sovereign, to whom they render the devotion and the drudgery of all their services.

In those cases, however, where wealth is the terminating object, there is still the process of sowing—even that process of diligence and of busy devisings, by which the schemes of this earthly ambition are carried on. Only the harvest, instead of consisting in any ulterior things which wealth can purchase, consists in the mere acquisition of the wealth itself. In the walks of merchandise, were we to look to the minds and the motives of its most aspiring candidates, would we often see that it was not what comes after the wealth, but the wealth itself which both set them agoing and keeps them agoing. They may be sowing, not unto the lust of the flesh, not unto the lust of the eye, not unto the pride of life, all of which are opposite to the love of the Father. But still they are sowing; and to that too, the love of which is equally opposite to the love of the Father. They who are seeking treasure for themselves, instead of seeking to be rich towards God, are in fact sowing unto the flesh, for they are sowing unto that which terminates with the body. They are sowing unto that which is altogether corrupt—understanding by this term altogether transitory. They are sowing unto that on which death, in a few little years, will put its impressive mockery. They are rearing their chief good on a foundation that is perishable. They are labouring for one portion only, which will speedi-

ly be wrested from them by the gripe of a destroyer—who will leave them without a portion, and without an inheritance for ever. They are labouring for a part in this world's substance, and in the possession of it, verily they may have their reward. But, in regard to the substance which endureth, as for it they have never laboured, so it they never will acquire. They have sought to be arrayed in perishable glory, and perhaps will find a little hour of magnificence on earth, ere they bid their everlasting adieu to its infatuations. But that hour will soon come to its termination; and Death may leave all the possessions untouched, but he will lay his rude and resistless hand upon the possessor. The house may stand in castellated pride for many generations, and the domain may smile for ages in undiminished beauty; but in less perhaps than half a generation, death will shoot his unbidden way to the inner apartment, and, without spoiling the lord of his property, he will spoil the property of its lord. It is not his way to tear the parchments, and the rights of investiture from the hand of their proprietor; but he paralyzes and unlocks the hand, and they fall like useless and forgotten things away from it. It is thus that Death smiles in ghastly contempt on all human aggrandizement. He meddles not with the things that are occupied; but he lays hold of the occupier; and this to him is as entire a deprivation, as if he trampled all that belonged to him into powder. He does not seize upon the wealth, but he lays his arrest upon the owner. He forces away his body to the grave, where it moulders into dust; and, in turning the soul out of its warm

and well-loved tenement, he turns it adrift on the cheerless waste of a desolate and neglected Eternity.

We are not told here that it is wrong to sow unto the flesh. This may be, this is a doctrine of the Bible; but it is not the doctrine of this particular verse. It does not pronounce on the criminality of the pursuit—but just on the evanescence of its objects. It simply tells us that the good attained by sowing unto the flesh is temporal; and to this the whole experience of man bears testimony. He cannot look upon general history, without perceiving the rapid movement of one generation after another. He cannot live long in the world, without perceiving the fall of acquaintances upon every side of him. He cannot have a circle of relatives around him, without the lesson of death being brought home to his feelings, by the touching incidents of his own domestic history. Should he still persist in associating either durability or magnitude with his earthly interests,—this may prove a moral or an intellectual derangement in himself; but it proves nothing against the affirmation, that, in sowing unto the flesh, he will of the flesh reap only corruption. As he grows older in years, he may grow more inveterate in delusion. As he draws towards the termination of his earthly existence, he may cling with more intense affection to its vanities. As the hour of his eternal separation from the world approaches, he may grow in the estimation of its value; and adhere more tenaciously to all its objects, and to all its interests. This proves him to be the child of infatuation; but

against the truth of the Bible, it proves nothing. It may bespeak the virulence of some great spiritual disease, which hath overspread our species. It may demonstrate, that, in reference to a great and awfully momentous truth, we labour under all the obstinacy of an habitual blindness. But the truth itself remains unshaken; and on every individual who is born into the world, it will be most surely and most speedily realized.

The second lesson, founded on these explanations of our text, that we would propose, is the unprovidedness of all those men for eternity, whose affections are settled upon the world, and who possess not one wish or one practical interest beyond the limits of its sensible horizon. That indeed is a meagre theology which would look upon the outcasts of human society, as the only outcasts from Heaven; and which would represent the path that leadeth unto spiritual and everlasting life, to be so gentle and so accessible that few do miss it, instead of representing it as that arduous and narrow path, of which our Saviour hath said that there be few who find it. It is a woeful delusion, and we fear the undoing of many an immortal spirit, that nought will shut us out of Paradise, but such literal and flagrant offences against the law of rectitude, as would degrade us beneath the average character of those decent and respectable and neighbour-like families, by whom we are encompassed; and that if we but acquit ourselves with tolerable fairness upon earth, we are fit for being translated when we die, among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Now it is true, that we may stand exempted

from all gross and outrageous delinquency. We may fulfil all the honesties of social intercourse. We may even have more than the average share of its humanities. The cordialities of domestic affection may, by the mechanism of our sentient nature, flow through our bosoms, in a stream as warm and as kindly as does the blood that circulates through our veins. And to many of the graces of private life, there may be added the activities of public life and of patriotism—the pulse of high and honourable feeling—the blush of unviolated delicacy—the ingenuousness of nature's truth—the sensibilities of nature's tenderness. And withal, there may be a taste most finely and feelingly alive, if not to those spiritual beauties which irradiate the character of the Godhead, at least to those sensible beauties wherewith the face of our goodly creation hath been decked so profusely by his hand; and there may be science, and imagination, and towering intellect, and sublime thoughts of truth and of the universe, and all the virtues which the happiest constitution can engender, and all the philosophy which loftiest genius can achieve. Now we would put it to your own sense and experience of our common nature, if you think it impossible, that a man so gifted shall breathe the element of irreligion; that, from morning to night, the God, amid the glories of whose workmanship he all the day rejoices, shall be to him like an unknown or a forgotten thing; that satisfied, and in full occupation with the business of the peopled region in which he dwells, he should cast not one look beyond the death to which his footsteps are

carrying him, should heave not one aspiration through the illuminated concave that is above his head; and that thus the Being, who hath graced and invested humanity with all that so proudly or so pleasingly adorns it, should be habitually and wholly disregarded by him, whom the hand of the Almighty Sovereign hath called forth, and exalted into the noblest of its specimens. And if indeed a creature so accomplished, might nevertheless live and die in ungodliness, then let us not be deceived into fatal security, by the virtues of an average and every-day world. They one and all of them may consist with alienation from God; and utter strangers to the spirit, or to the things of that spiritual economy which He has instituted, they may, throughout all their rounds of business or companionship or pleasure, be sowing only unto the flesh, and making this earth this perishable earth the scene of all their joys and of all their expectations. We charge them not with crime—yet, if so immersed in earthliness as to have lost all practical sensibility to God, we must refuse their Christianity. The whole drift and tendency of their affections are to the things which are beneath. The effort, the anxiety, the perpetual longing of their hearts, are all toward the accommodations and the interests of time. They are carnally minded which is death. They sow unto the flesh, and of the flesh they shall reap corruption.

And this is the consummation of their present being, not because they have lived either in profane or in profligate wickedness, but simply because they have lived without God—because they have made

earth their resting-place; and, altogether pleased with what is perishable, the general habit of their souls has marked them to be citizens of earth and not of heaven—with this world as the alone repository of their interests and hopes, without one pilgrim sigh, and far less one pilgrim step, towards the land of Eternity. Were you to put it to their choice, whether, if all was prosperous here, it was not here that they would like to live for ever—it might bring the state of their affections to the test, and decide the question of their being carnal or spiritual men. Let the proposal be made, that, with health and fortune and friendship, and the bloom of perpetual youth and the blessings of joyous companionship and an affectionate family, there should withal be the elixir of immortality poured into your cup; and on the face of this goodly world, so full of sweets and of sunshine, you should be permitted to expatiate for ever. Tell me, if, on these terms, you would not cleave with fondest tenacity to your present habitation; and be willing to live all recklessly as heretofore of the God that upholds you? Would you not be glad to take everlasting leave of your Maker; and, could you only be spared the encounter of that hideous death which disembodies the soul and conveys it to the land of spectres, would you not consent far rather to sojourn and to spend your eternity in this more congenial land? In other words, would you not prefer that God and you should be everlastingly quit of each other—rather than be wrested from your tenements of clay; and deprived of your footing on that territory, where

alone those earthly enjoyments are to be found, that are suited to your earthly nature? Tell me if you could not forego even heaven and all its psalmody to be fairly let alone; and, for the sake of a lasting and undisturbed inheritance in this smiling world, would you not agree that God should withdraw Himself in eternal oblivion from your thoughts, and that you should be eternal outcasts from God's spiritual family?

You may plead in apology, that, in choosing for earth rather than heaven, you just make the universal choice of nature; but it only proves the truth of this great Bible position—that Nature is in a state of exile from God—and that there is indeed a wide disruption between the planet on which we dwell, and the rest of God's unfallen creation. It only proves that you are yet of the flesh and not of the spirit; and that you have not made that mighty transition by which the affections are carried upward from the dust of this perishable world, to that upper sanctuary where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and where God sitteth on a throne that is at once a throne of grace and of righteousness. Be assured if so, that you are not in a state which it will do to die in. There will be no such earth as the one that we inhabit—after the present economy is dissolved; and succeeded by a heaven where all is sacredness and seraphic ecstasy, and a hell where all is the defiance and the desperation of rooted resolved and implacable ungodliness. Such a middle region as the one we at present occupy, where the creature enjoys himself amid the gifts and cares not for the giver, cannot long be

tolerated. It is an anomaly on the face of creation, and will as such be swept away. And meanwhile the processes of our text are those which connect your doings here, with one or other of the two destinies hereafter. "If you sow unto the flesh you will of the flesh reap corruption. If you sow unto the spirit you will of the spirit reap life everlasting."

We have hitherto used the term corruption in the sense it has in the text—that is the property of being perishable and so transitory; and, ere we conclude in a few words with the common sense of the term as denoting the moral property of being criminal or faulty, let us just make one remark which at present we cannot afford to expatiate on. It is this—that the man who soweth unto the flesh, or in other words labours to secure some earthly enjoyment, that he should reap only corruption, or reap only that which at length passes away from him and ceases any longer to be—why this is in perfect keeping with all the analogies of nature and human life. It is the proper result of the course on which he hath entered. It is in conformity with all that takes place in other paths of activity and exertion —where it is found that as is the aim so is the accomplishment. The schoolboy seeks for amusement, and he finds it—he gets the one thing his heart is set upon but not another thing—he gets not the acquisition of a fortune for example. The daughter of many graces and many accomplishments seeks for distinction in the circle of fashion, and that may be realised; but you would never look, for the result of such an aim or such an enterprise, to distinction in the circle of politics. The citizen looks

forward in perspective, and labours in the walk of busy merchandise, for the sum which he thinks will satiate the ambition of his nature—this he may reach, but not surely an eminence of literary fame. And so of every other landing-place to every other path of exertion. As is the seeking so is the finding. The man of business does not get a name in philosophy. The man of letters does not get to the pinnacle of affluence. The man of victory in war, does not obtain the glory which is achieved by the man of discovery in science. And so, to use a designation comprehensive of them all, the man of the world realises some one or other of the world's objects; but he does not realise the things or the interests of heaven. Verily he hath his reward. He gets what he sought for, and has no right to complain if he do not get what he never sought for. He reaches the appropriate termination of his path. Time and Eternity are both set before him; he made choice of time, and he hath sped accordingly. But his eternity is a blank; and it were in violation of all the analogies of human experience if it were otherwise. It is thus, if we had time to illustrate the lesson a little farther, that a flood of light may be thrown upon the position that—not because a man's actions are criminal, but simply because his affections are earthly—not because in the deeds of his hand there has been ought of the violent but because in the desires of his heart there has been nought of the spiritual—not because he hath done that which should disgrace him in this world of sinners which is soon to pass away, but simply because he hath neither sought after a place nor laboured

in the work of preparation for that world of saints which is to remain in brightness for ever—On these grounds alone, and without the imputation of any notorious delinquency at all, there is many a most respectable citizen, who, viewed in reference to his capacity as an immortal creature, lives all his days in a state of utter negation and nakedness; and who, when overtaken by death, will find himself on the margin of an unprovided eternity, with nought in its mighty and unexplored vastness before him but the dark imagery of desolation and despair.

But the final issue of such a life as he hath spent in the world, is something additional to a mere shortness from heaven. There is further included in it the positive wretchedness of hell: And ere the reason and the conscience can be reconciled to such a consummation as this, it is not enough to make out that he has been all along sowing to that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is transitory; but that further, he is chargeable with that which is corrupt in the sense of that which is morally reprehensible and wrong. The great difficulty of a gospel minister lies in convincing of this, our amiable and virtuous but withal worldly men. Our chief encounter in society, is with a meagre and superficial imagination of guilt. Men know not what they have done, that should land them in so frightful a consummation, as the hell of the New Testament. They understand not how it is, that any sin of theirs should have lighted up those fires which are to burn everlastingly. They will admit that they have failings; but surely nothing commensurate to a vengeance so relentless and so intermin-

able as this. There may be some desperadoes in wickedness—there may be a few of stouter and more stubborn hardihood than all their fellows—there may be men of fiend-like atrocity, whom the children of this world so little resemble, that the world at large would shudder at them—these may be the befitting inmates of that dire and dreadful Pandæmonium, where the spirits of the accursed dwell. But surely the kind and the courteous and the companionable men of our own daily walk and our own familiar neighbourhood, with whom we exchange the visits of hospitality and the smiles of benignity and goodwill—you would not assimilate their guilt, with, that of the daring outcast, who passes through life in utter recklessness of all its duties and of all its decencies. This cause of the peace which men feel about their eternal prospects is distinct from the former. It is a juridical principle that is quite current among men, and lends a mighty reinforcement to the apathy of Nature. They are at peace, because they do not see that theirs is at all a guilt so grievous as to bring down upon it the burden of a grievous condemnation—and so a peace which we fear is no peace.

There is indeed in all this a very complete illusion. For a man to be execrated as a monster in society, he must have outraged the duties of that relation in which he stands to his fellow-men. Now of all these he may have acquitted himself in a very tolerable way; and yet there is another and a distinct relation, to which also belong peculiar duties of its own, and which he may have altogether neglected —we mean the relation in which he stands, not to

the beings of his own species, but to the Being who made him. He may have discharged himself of all that he owes to his fellows upon earth, and yet have been utterly unmindful of what he owes to God in heaven. He may have felt the force of all those moral and sympathetic affections, which bind men together into a community below—and yet felt no attraction whatever to Him who is the great Parent and Preserver of the human family. There might be many a close and kindly reciprocation of mutual esteem, and mutual tenderness, and all the virtues of good neighbourhood, among ourselves; and yet the whole of this terrestrial society, be in a state of utter disruption from Him who is at once the source and the centre of the created Universe. It is just as if a stray planet, might retain its cohesion, and its chemistry, and all those laws of motion and plastic influences which would continue to uphold many of the processes of our present terrestrial physics; but which loosed from its gravitation to the sun would drift waywardly in space, and become an outcast from the harmonies of the great mundane system. Now this is precisely what the Bible affirms of the spiritual world. The men of this planet have broken off their affinity to God. They retain many of their wonted affinities for each other; but they have made disruption and a wide and general departure from God. They have yet a terrestrial ethics with the graces and moralities of which some are so richly adorned, as to shine in beauteous lustre before the eye of their fellows; while others, even in reference to these earth-born virtues, are so marred and

mutilated, that they are looked upon by all as the objects of a revolting deformity. Of the great principle of the celestial Ethics, both may at the same time be alike destitute. It is experimentally true, that the man of compassion and the man of cruelty, with hearts so differently affected by the sight of distress, may be in the same state of practical indifference towards God. It is in the spirit of a sound philosophy, as well as of a sound faith, to affirm that Humanity, with all her complexional varieties of character between one specimen and another, may be throughout impregnated with the deep spirit of ungodliness. This is the representation of that scripture which speaketh to us from heaven; and to this, we believe, that every enlightened conscience upon earth will re-echo. It charges not injustice upon all. It charges not gross and abominable licentiousness upon all. It charges not open or scandalous profaneness upon all. But it charges ungodliness upon all. When brought to the bar of civil or criminal law, when brought to the bar of public opinion, when brought to the bar of social or conventional morality amongst men, you may be most fully and honourably acquitted. Yet when brought to the bar of a higher jurisprudence, there may be laid and most rightfully laid upon you, the burden of an overwhelming condemnation. It is then and then only that ungodliness stands forth as an article of the indictment against you. It is then that the Being who made you takes up His own cause, and appears in support of His own controversy. It is then that question is made, not of the claims which men have upon you, but of those peculiar

and transcendental claims which God has upon you. It is then that you are met with the question—"What have you done unto God?" In reference to the moralities of your human companionship below, there is perhaps not one earthly tribunal before which you might not stand in the attitude of proud integrity. In reference to that transcendental morality, which relates the thing that is formed to Him who hath formed it—there is the overthrow of every pretension and man's boasted righteousness melteth utterly away.

Now it is man's blindness to this principle, which forms one main ingredient of the false and the fatal peace that is so general in our world. There is blindness to the jurisprudence of the upper sanctuary, as well as blindness to the futurities of the unseen state. The two together have the effect of a most deadly opiate; nor are we to wonder if our species have been charmed thereby, into so profound a spiritual lethargy.—And thus it is, that, though the creatures of a fleeting and fantastic day, we tread on earth with as assured footstep, as if, instead of its shortlived tenants we were to be everlastingly its lords. And the laugh, and the song, and the festive gaiety, and the busy schemes of earthliness, all speak a generation fast locked in the insensibility of spiritual death. Nor do the terrors of the grave shake this tranquillity—nor do the still more awful terrors of the judgment-seat. That day of man's dissolution which is so palpably at hand, and which sends before it so many intimations, fails to disturb him. That day of the world's dissolution, when the trumpet shall be sounded, and the men of all gen-

erations shall awake to the high reckonings of eternity, and this earth and these Heavens shall be involved in the ruins of one mighty conflagration, and the wrath that now is suspended in this season of offered mercy shall at length break forth into open manifestation on all the sons and daughters of ungodliness—this day, which when it cometh, will absorb every heart in one fearful and overwhelming interest—now that it only is to come, and is seen through the imagined vista of many successive centuries, has no more effect than a dream of poetry. And, whether from the dimness of nature's sight to all the futurities of the spiritual world, or from its slender apprehension of that guilt which in the sacred eye of heaven is so enormous—certain it is, that men can travel onward both to the death and to the judgment, and say peace, peace, when there is no peace.

The awfulness of the first of these events, even death, bears in it experimental proof to God's intolerance of sin. If He indeed felt our guilt, as little as we feel our danger—if His displeasure were a thing as slight and as gentle as our alarm—why so dreadful a visitation upon our species as death?—a thing unknown to angels, and from which the whole of sentient nature shrinks as at the approach of most unnatural violence. If God be as much at peace with the world, as the world is at peaceful complacency with itself—why keep up so hard and so hostile a dispensation against it?—or if sin be of as trivial account in the estimation of Heaven, as it is in the estimation of human society—how should it have brought down such a ven-

geance upon earth, as to have smitten it with the plague of mortality throughout all its borders; and swept off to the hideousness of the grave, all the life and beauty and intelligence of its successive generations. That surely is no trifle, which has turned this bright and blooming world into a vast sepulchral abode for the men of all ages. Its moaning death-beds, and its weeping families, and its marred and broken companionships—these are all emphatic testimonies to God's hatred of moral evil; for that sin brought all this calamity upon the world, is a principle announced to us in scripture—and it is the only principle which resolves to us the mystery of death. And when the same scripture announces that after death cometh the judgment—O let us not give in to the treacherous imagination; that He who hath made such fell exhibition of severity in the one, will in the other but manifest and indulge his tenderness. But let us be very sure, that, as death is to every unrepentant sinner but the beginning of his sorrows, so judgment will be to him as a second death.

We shall be happy, if, as the fruit of these observations, we can convince any of you, that, apart from crime, apart from literal transgressions of the divine law, there may be the utmost spiritual destitution in the mere earthliness of our affections—the most entire unfitness for heaven above, simply because our heart's delight and desire are set upon the world that is below—an eternity wholly unprovided, because the pleasures and the provision of time are all that we seek and all that we care for. There is a juridical principle, that nothing will condemn

us at the bar of our final reckoning, but crime; and then that mere carnality, in the general sense of the word, is no crime. Now it is not a crime in the eye of human jurisprudence; but in the eye of the divine jurisprudence it is the most enormous of all. It is the preference of the creature to the Creator, and will terminate in the gloom of everlasting deprivation and despair, after that Creation, in its present power to engage and to gratify, shall have passed away, and we shall have to do with the rebuke and the resentment of Creation's Lord who endureth for ever. O be persuaded, then, of your need of a gospel; and give up from this time forward your indifference and contempt for it. Be assured that the great apparatus, of a Mediator, and a Sacrifice, and a risen High Priest, and an Intercession to reconcile, and a Spirit to sanctify —be assured that all this was not uncalled for; and now seek unto Him who is able to change you from the carnal to the spiritual, to crucify those affections which have their objects on earth and are now so vigorously alive, and to quicken within you such new affections as have their objects in Heaven, and without which Heaven can never be the place of our abode, and just because it cannot be the place of our enjoyment.

SERMON II.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor. ii. 2.

You are aware that Christian truth consists, not of one article, but of many articles; that in the treasury of sacred wisdom, there are things both new and old, and all of which ought to be brought forth, and unfolded to the view of those who are attending the lessons of preparation for eternity; that just as in a landscape of nature, so it is not one single object which either by its magnitude occupies the whole of the spiritual landscape, or even by the lustre of its overbearing worth and importance ought to engross our exclusive regards to it. There is not one object in the whole field of revelation, which should so fasten and concentrate our observation upon it, as to detach us from all the others that stand out there in visible exhibition; nor one of such exceeding size and prominency, as should cause us to overlook the variety of lesser objects that are strewed around its pedestal. But still as you may have often noticed on some scene or representation of visible beauty, that, all crowded though it be with traits of loveliness, there is some one figure in the groupe bearing itself so nobly and so commandingly over the rest, as to be

ever drawing the eye and the admiration of the spectator towards it—so, among all the diversities which the Bible places before the spiritual eye, may there be one truth of such eclipsing superiority over all the others, as that ever present, or at least of constant recurrence to the thoughts, it may be the one on which a Christian heart shall dwell with perpetual fondness, and be oftenest absorbed in the contemplation of it. Paul in the text points to such a truth; and if he do not just tell us that it ought to monopolise the regards of every disciple, he at least tells us of its lofty and superlative claims upon them. It is well that in this matter we have the guidance of apostolical taste and apostolical discernment; nor can we do better than look to that very quarter where this gifted man of inspiration is so fixedly looking, when he says I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

While so employed, we should like chiefly to confine your attention to the specification which the apostle attaches to our Saviour, when he passes from the mention of Christ in the general to the mention of Him crucified; and to demonstrate the title which this object so specialised has on the supreme attention of Christians. And it will appear in the course of our observations, that, though Christ crucified should be the supreme, He is not the sole object of our regard; and that, so far from the dignity of the object being reduced in consequence, it is in fact enhanced when thus translated from a place of solitude to a place of supremacy.

The first title that Christ crucified hath upon

our attention is, that by the knowledge of this we are provided against the most urgent and appalling calamity which hangs over our species. If we abide in ignorance herein, the wrath of God abideth upon us. Let the apathy of man to his real condition be what it may—this may lighten for a time his fears, but it does not lighten the actual burden of his curse and his condemnation. He may have been seized by the spirit of deep slumber; but he only sleeps on the eve of a coming storm. Such may be the profoundness of his spiritual lethargy, that the denunciations of vengeance are unheard; and the storehouse of that vengeance in heaven, even the breast of the offended Godhead, in which are treasured up the remembrance of all His wrongs, and His unalterable purposes of redress and vindication—this may lie hid in deep oblivion from his eye; and just because the danger is wholly unfelt, the deliverance therefrom may be wholly unprized. He may be alike reckless of sin and of the Saviour; and because the one falls lightly upon his conscience, the other may be of light esteem in his computation. But it is not his blindness that can either change, or can annihilate, the eternal relationships by which he is surrounded. He is within the domain of an eternal government, beyond which he cannot transport himself. He is under the authority of a strict and unchangeable law, from which he cannot escape. There is a throne in heaven, and a God sitting upon that throne, from the rebuke of whose countenance he cannot flee away—by whom the meanest of His accountable family cannot be overlooked—and all whose dealings with every creature whom He

has formed, will serve to illustrate the force and the purity and the rectitude of a high moral administration. It is in the power of man to shut his eyes, and so extinguish his perception of the truth: but he cannot extinguish the truth itself. These are the real and stable and substantial conditions of his being, and he cannot obliterate them. He hath broken a commandment, the awful sanctions of which were set forth in the hearing of men and of angels; and in their sight they must be executed. There is a solemn day that will speedily overtake us all, when we shall be reckoned with for our ungodliness—when we shall be charged with having lived out our time in the world, regardlessly of Him who made the world—when the heart shall be taken cognisance of for all its stray affections from Him to whom it owed supreme allegiance—when the question shall be put, what hast thou done unto God; and the mighty requirement of doing all things to His glory shall be set up, as the only standard of reference by which to try all our duties and all our deviations. All this we may cancel for a time from our own recollection; but we cannot cancel it from the book of God's remembrance—nor can we cancel it from those certainties which shall be fulfilled, on the person of every sinner who dies an outcast from reconciliation. Truth will have its way upon him. The jealousies of an incensed God will burst forth into an open discharge; and all the attributes of a nature that is holy and unchangeable must then stand out in their own proper demonstration. Among the frivolities of a short-lived day, we may have cradled our souls into

unconcern; and this may disguise from us, but it cannot destroy in itself, the reality of things. The treachery of this world's delusions, can never belie the truth of heaven's declarations. And still it remaineth, amid all the unheedings of nature's incredulity and nature's blindness—that there must be some awful adjustment between God as the insulted Sovereign, and man as the rebel who hath defied and disobeyed Him.

The direct and, if one may so term it, the natural way of bringing about this adjustment, were by the infliction of the threatened penalty on those who had incurred it—precisely as the difference between a creditor and a debtor is adjusted, by enforcing payment. It is thus that God might have eased Him of his adversaries; and swept away from the face of His creation that guilt which had deformed it; and made full demonstration of His justice and His power by lifting up the red arm of an avenger over the hosts of the rebellious; and as it were cleared out from the domain of purity, the loathsome and offensive spectacle of sin, by dooming all who were tainted with it to an accursed territory, where they should be for ever apart from the children of His own kingdom. And this is the very doom that lies on humanity—the very curse that adheres to each individual member of it—the very sentence which, whether you tremble under it or not, is written against you in the book of condemnation. And could we only pursue each conscience, with the apprehension of this, as with an arrow sticking fast; and make known to its owner, how unrelenting the law of God is, and how impossible it were for

Him, by any compromise of dignity or of truth, to connive at transgression or look to sin without the full attestation of His righteous abhorrence—then might every soul, awake to the dread reality of its own condition, above all other knowledge hold the knowledge of a Saviour to be indeed the most precious.

And it is through a Saviour, that the adjustment between the Lawgiver and the sinner has been made. The tidings of this adjustment form the very essence of the gospel. The debt is not exacted from the principal, because paid by a surety. The penalty is not laid on the transgressor, because laid upon a substitute. To remove the offence of a dishonoured law, there needeth not now that the offender shall be borne away to a place of exile or imprisonment—for by the price of a Redeemer's blood hath the law been magnified; and, grander exhibition far of its authority than that the sinner should die, is that he should pass under the covert of His mediatorship who gave himself up a nobler sacrifice. It is this which constitutes the excellency of the knowledge of Christ crucified. There was a need be, that the wrath of God should be discharged; and it has been discharged on the head of this illustrious sufferer. There was a need be, that if ever mercy should go forth from heaven upon our world, it should wear upon its forehead the impress of the truth and justice and holiness of heaven; and that these perfections of Him who dwelleth there should so appear in vindicated majesty, as that glory to God in the highest might meet and be in harmony with peace on earth and goodwill to the children

of men: And nowhere but in the cross of Christ hath the world beheld so very peculiar a manifestation of the Godhead. There was a need be, that, if ever again the sinner could be admitted into the august presence of Him whom he had displeased, the way of readmittance should be guarded by such a ceremonial, as would announce to him in solemn and emphatic characters the evil of sin; and for this purpose a way has been opened, through the rent vail of a Saviour's flesh, and been consecrated by the blood of a divine atonement. And what can more concern you than to know this path of recall from your eternal banishment? What more momentous to us, than that there has been found out another way for the descending vengeance of heaven, than that it should fall on our guilty and devoted heads? What is there on the wide universe in which we are placed, that should come more urgently home to our personal interests and fears, than when told of that mighty and mysterious transference by which the whole burden of this tremendous curse has been made to pass away from us; and we are again ushered back into the friendship of heaven's family?

And let us have you all to understand, that this is not the general exposition of an argument, in which you have no concern, and to which you may look from a distance with an eye of cold and intellectual speculation. There is none here present, on whom it does not bear with the specific import of one who is pointedly and individually addrest by it. The message of the gospel is something more than a voice, which merely reports to all what is

good that all may hear of it. It is in fact the bearer of what is good, and brings the good nigh unto each that each may lay hold of it. There is in it no doubt the testimony of a great deliverance for sinners; but this testimony is just as good as an offer to all who are within reach of the sound of it—for there is a way of so receiving the testimony, as that the deliverance of which it speaks shall be received along with it, and it thus be fastened on by an act of appropriation. And the way in which you have to receive it, is simply to receive it with credit. Put faith in it, and you will have in your own person the full experience of its faithfulness It is your trust in this gospel salvation, which constitutes your acceptance of it. It is on the stepping-stone of belief in the record, that you pass from death unto life. This is the one and only turning point of your reconciliation; and did we know how to frame the intimation, so as to bring it more plainly and more persuasively to your doors, we should labour to assure you of this, that the more firm your reliance on the blood of the great propitiation, the more certain is your possession of all it hath wrought and of all it hath purchased for you.

Let the sinner then be fairly arrested by a sense of danger—let his conscience be up in alarm because of the coming judgment; and truth with its penetrating beams make known to him that he is in the hands of an angry God—let him once be overtaken by that fearfulness, which, under a just view of his exposed and guilty condition, should seize upon his soul; and, shooting his anticipations

across that barrier of death to which he is so rapidly approaching, let the eternity beyond it be peopled to the eye of his mind with the appalling imagery of vengeance and despair—O how fondly would he desire, and how highly would he appreciate the tidings of Christ crucified; and even join the apostle in saying, that nothing else than this he desired to know, because nothing but this could bring him relief from the terrors by which he was occupied. Wretched, and wearied out with attempts to find the door of escape, would he hail with rapture that outlet from the penalties of the law, which has been opened up by the expiatory death made known to us in the gospel; and when he sees in the provisions of its wondrous economy, how by the noblest of victims there had been rendered to the justice of God the noblest of vindications—how it must rejoice him to find that the Divinity might at once be glorified and he himself be safe.

But of what avail it may be thought, is the doctrine of Christ crucified, when there is no such vivacity of alarm—when people immersed in worldliness have no care or concern for any thing beyond it—when these terrors are all unfelt, and the tidings of deliverance are therefore all unheeded—and the medicine is in no demand, just because the disease has excited no apprehension? This is very much the general condition of men in society. They are in peace already, and therefore need nothing to pacify them. Christ has been called the anchor of the soul; but ere the soul go in quest of an anchor must it not first be thrown into stormy agitation? And must there not be revealed to the spiritual eye

the vengeance that lies upon guilt, ere it can discern or look with fond complacency on the worth of the offered atonement?

Now it is very true, that, were we to describe the religious state of the great majority of our species, we should say that the danger on the one hand and the deliverance on the other are alike unseen by them—that if they have no joy in the pardon of the gospel, they have as little consternation in the threats of the law—and that, profoundly asleep unto both, they live without delight in Christ as their Saviour, and without dread of God as their Judge.

And thus it has been a most natural imagination among Christian writers, that, ere men will seek to know Christ crucified, they must be made to know themselves as liable to the punishment that he hath borne—that they must first be awakened to a sight of the enemy who pursues them, ere they will flee to that place of refuge where they are in safety from his power—that a sense of guilt must take the precedency in their hearts, of any anxious longing after absolution from it—and that each must feel with pungency he is a great sinner, ere he can feel the preciousness of Christ as a great Saviour.

Of what use then, may it be thought, is it to preach Christ to a listless and lethargic auditory? Paul, it is true, said that he determined to know nothing else among his hearers—but is not one thing at least indispensable to be previously known, ere the excellency of the knowledge of Christ can be at all appreciated? Must not the people who are addrest with the offer of salvation, be con-

vinced of sin, ere salvation can be at all dear to them?

Let us attempt to state in a few words, how we conceive that this matter practically stands. And first we think, that we must have the testimony of many consciences when we say, that there is not much of grief, there is not much of sensibility, there is not any very pungent or penetrating conviction of sin in your hearts—nothing we fear that amounts to a state of spiritual distress or spiritual restlessness—and that, bating a few week-day forms and a few sabbath observations, the successive months and years of your existence in this world pass tolerably away, without any thing being either very sensibly felt, or very strenuously done by you, for the interest of your eternity.

Now it is not by the very same footsteps, that all are led from their present state of death in trespasses and sins, to the state of being spiritually alive. Could we in the first instance disturb them out of their security—could we lead them to see that gulph of destruction, which lieth at the end of the broad way, crowded as it is by a multitude as heedless as themselves—could the frown of an incensed lawgiver be made manifest to their souls, and they be told to their own apprehension that by nature they are undone—this were a condition which some have realized; and weary and heavy laden under a sense of its terrors, have at length heard the invitation to rest, and to their happiness have found it. The terrors of the law have shut them up unto the faith of the gospel; and they have arrived at peace, through a labyrinth of

many disquietudes. It was by an avenue through the dark forebodings of guilt, that they at length reached a landing place among the comforts and promises of the gospel; and, as we often read in the history of conversions—the transition of their hearts, from the false peace of nature to the true peace of Christianity, was through a long intermediate passage of many doubts and many agitations.

Now though this is a frequent way of passing out of darkness into marvellous light, it is not the only way. We would not ply you exclusively with the threatenings of the law—till we judged the alarm to be enough lively, and the affliction for sin to be enough deep and sorrowful, and the sense of danger and of helplessness to be enough overwhelming, and the whole discipline of legal remorse and legal apprehensions to be enough lengthened out—for then plying you with the overtures of reconciliation, through Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We should rather incline to mix both at the outset of our ministrations; and, alike removed though many of you may be from the fears of guilt and the consolations of grace, yet, within the compass of a single breathing, should we like to tell that while by the one all has been lost, by the other all has been regained for you.

And our reason for this, will perhaps recommend itself to your own experience. No man likes to open his eyes to the spectacle which gives him pain; and, should he have the power, he would rather turn him away from it. Could he, by the putting forth of his own volitions, drown the remembrance of that which hurts or which disquiets

him—then the temptation will be to yield to a little more sleep and a little more slumber. He will bid off the unwelcome intruder if he can; and that for the sake of a peaceful or a pleasing oblivion from all that might harrow up his soul—just as the mariners of a sinking vessel, or the adventurer on a sea of commercial speculation who finds that his coming bankruptcy is inevitable, have been known to take an opiate in mad intoxication from the agonising sense of the ruin which impended over them.

Now it is just so with the human mind in reference to eternity, and to Him who has the disposal of it. Let a demonstration be offered in the characters of terror; and man's first and natural movement would be to make his escape from it. He will keep aloof from a spectacle that disturbs him; and by the very distance at which he stands from it, may protect his conscience from all violent or distressful agitation. In these circumstances, let the severities of the law be offered and nothing else, and the man may seek after any outlet rather than brave a contemplation so appalling. He may never, through his whole life long, have experience of the deeper agonies of horror or remorse—and, just because of the wilful and resolute distance at which he keeps himself from the whole contemplation, he, from the place he occupies, may view religion as a dull and a comfortless system; and while perhaps he acquits himself of its outward decencies, he will take care if he can help it not to drink in its terrors. And many are his facilities for keeping it at abeyance, and for postponing all settlement of the question to a more convenient season—when like

to tremble as Felix of old, under the power of its denunciation. How easy it were in the glee of merry companionship, to drown the urgencies of the last menacing sermon. How manifold are the varieties of business or amusement, in whose whirl he can dissipate every rising impression of fear or of seriousness in his bosom. With what effect can he lull the alarms of his inward monitor, by any of the thousand soporifics, which sense and time and the world administer to carnality. And then how possible it is for a man to throw himself into the arms of forgetfulness, and to cradle his soul in the repose of a deep and determined insensibility. The preaching of the law, though in all the thunders of its violated majesty, may have no more power to shake the sinner out of his spiritual lethargies, than the louder fury of the storm has to recall to duty the inebriated mariner. The manifestation of a coming vengeance to the one, may have just the effect that the manifestation of a coming shipwreck has upon the other. It may drive both to their expedients of stupefaction; and the excess of an abandoned crew on the eve of their engulphment, is but the counterpart to the insanity of those, who, in this world's oblivious draughts, hush all sense of their dark and fathomless eternity.

The way to rally this desperado crew were, not that the tempest should blow more fiercely, but to cause the signal be heard of relief and safety at hand; and then would they put forth all their strenuousness to make for it. And the way to summon back again from his plunge of reckless dissipation, the merchant who had lost all hope of

his affairs, were not to astound him with the tidings of another disaster—but to come forth with such a gift or offer of suretyship, as might cover all his deficiencies, and make credit and independence again to smile upon his labours. And so it is with the voyagers of our great earthly pilgrimage; and so it is with those who are debtors to do the whole law, and who are shortly to be brought to the bar of heaven's reckoning. Quite in vain to tell them of the coming storm, if this be all. Quite in vain to threaten these irrecoverable defaulters with the eternal imprisonment that awaits them, if they have no other remedy than mad and insensate carelessness against the horrors of despair. The only way to recall them to the path and the attitude of immortal creatures, is to clear away that thick and awful darkness, which before sat on the prospects of their immortality. There is no other way of rescuing them from the state of being without God, but by rescuing them from the state of being without hope in the world. If you want to move them out of their lethargy, you must follow up the demonstration of their sin, by the demonstration of the Saviour who died for it. It is this which gives such effect to the preaching of the gospel; and turns its peace, and its invitation, and its kindness, into the elements of a ministry still more awakening, than any which has nought but the threats and the terrors of legality to sustain it. And you who have hitherto withstood all that is tremendous in the thoughts of the fierceness of Almighty God—some even of you may be drawn to do Him homage, when you look to the embassy of love that He sent by His

Son into the world; and, more especially, when you see that the great barrier of separation is now taken down, and that a high way of conversion has been opened for you all through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

SERMON III.

DANGER OF NEGLECTING THE GOSPEL.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—HEBREWS ii. 3.

WE recently observed, in discoursing on the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and of Him crucified, that some were visited with an alarming sense of danger, and were long kept in a state of pain and of perplexity, and had much of disquietude upon their spirits—ere they found their way to a place of rest, or a place of enlargement. They had to describe a course of dark and strong agitation among the terrors of the law, ere they arrived at their secure haven among the comforts of the gospel. And manifold is the recorded experience of those, on whose desolate hearts the light of the offered reconciliation never beamed—till they had been preyed upon for months and years, by the remorse of a coming guilt, by the dread of a coming vengeance.

But we further observed, that, though this was frequent in the history of conversions, it was far from universal. And why should it? There is a message of pardon from heaven at our door; and, its very first demand upon us, is that we should give credit thereto. If any one claim upon us be preferable to another, surely it is the claim of Him

who cannot lie, that we shall believe in His testimony. Are we to hold the truth of God at abeyance, aye and until we have walked some round of mental discipline and experience, that may liken the history of our translation from darkness unto light, to that of some fellow-mortal who has gone before us? Are we to postpone our faith in an actual report, brought to us from the upper sanctuary, till we have brought the frame of our spirits to its right adjustment, by having travelled over a course of certain feelings and certain fluctuations? Meanwhile let us recollect, that an embassy from Heaven is waiting to be heard; that it is charged with the tidings of an atonement for sin wherewith God is satisfied, if we are but satisfied; that we lie under a peremptory invitation to look unto Christ and be saved; and that overtures of peace and of forgiveness are before us, of which we are expressly bidden to entertain and to close with them. This is a light, in which the gospel hath dawned upon some at the very outset of their religious earnestness; and no sooner did it so shine upon them, than they rejoiced. The earliest morning of their Christianity arose in gladness—so that they were scarcely sensible of any tempestuous passage midway, from the peace of nature to the peace of the gospel. The call to believe, they felt to be imperative; and, coming as it did with what they were made to recognise as a voice of authority, it permitted not the lapse of a single day, between the conviction that they were great sinners, and the consolation that Christ was a great Saviour. They felt that they had no right to suspend their assurance in the

truth of what God said, till they had completed a given period of sighing and of sorrowing, because of their unworthiness. And so, they drew almost instantly to the tidings of great joy, that there is salvation for all who will; and of course they as instantly became joyful. Their transition seems to have been immediate, from a state of ungodliness, to a sense of God as their reconciled Father. Some, in the process of being made alive unto God, are made first alive to Him as their offended judge; and then alive to Him as their friend, whose anger has been turned away, and who has nought towards them but thoughts of peace and of great kindness. Others again arrive at this without any stepping-stone. They are drawn at once by the cords of love, without being driven by the terrors of the law. Instead of being awakened by the thunders of its violated authority, they are awakened, like the shepherds of Bethlehem, by a music of sweeter and softer utterance, that breathes peace on earth and goodwill even to the guiltiest of all its generations.

Now we should not object to any one individual who is here present being so awakened. Let the habit and the history of his life up to this moment have been what they may, we could not forbid that he should now look to the amplitude and the freeness of the gospel offer, and therein rejoice. Though never visited till now, with one thought of practical seriousness towards God—yet even now is it competent for him, to meet the Father of his spirit and count on a Father's tenderness. We ask not one moment of distrust or despondency at his hand; and should like it rather, that, sunken

though he be in the depths of spiritual lethargy, he were aroused therefrom, not by the appalling denunciations of vengeance, but by the sounds of jubilee, and the proclaimed welcome from Heaven of a God waiting to be gracious. We know that there is a peace where there is no peace; and better than this sleep of death, were the disturbance of loud and perpetual alarm, from which there might be no respite to the sinner, till forced to betake himself to the alone effectual hiding-place. But better most assuredly still, that you saw the hiding-place to be open now; and that, without the interval of a single moment, you now fled for refuge there, and that the soul had no sooner broken loose from the tranquillity of nature, than it instantly fastened on the anchor of a hope that was more sure and steadfast. At this rate there would be no season of intermediate dreariness. Converts would experience now, what was oft experienced in the days of the apostles. Their belief would instantly come in the train of the gospel testimony—and their joy would instantly come in the train of their belief. The glad tidings of the new Testament would have precisely the same effect upon their spirit, with any other glad tidings. It would simply make them glad; and so, without the gloom or the agitation or the terror through which many have to pass, might there be a direct hold on the promises of scripture,—the settled peacefulness of a heart, that has found its rest and its dependence under the canopy of the accepted mediatorship.

We know that there are some who apprehend a

danger in making the salvation of the gospel too accessible—who think that it ought not thus to be cheapened down to a level with any of those common beauties of nature, to the free participation of which all are welcome—who would demand in every instance a course of preceding terror, ere the disciple shall reach the triumph or the tranquillity of Faith—who feel as if it were due to the vindication of God's dignity as a Lawgiver, that every believer shall be solemnized into a more awful sense of the evil of sin, than he is likely to attain, by an easy and immediate transition from a state of wrath to a state of acceptance—and who, for this purpose, would have him to undergo the chastening of a legal discipline, during which he might taste the bitterness of remorse; and be left for a season to mourn or tremble under the hidings of God's offended countenance. Now we dispute not that this is one, and a very common way, in which the law acts as a school-master for bringing men to Christ. Yet it is not the invariable way. And still we affirm, that the gospel cannot be trusted in too soon; and that men cannot give up too early, their doubt and their unbelief in the truth of Heaven's communication; and that the more quickly we are rid of all suspense, in regard to God's own testimony, the better—or, in other words, the more shortly that the period of dread and disturbance comes to an end, and the sooner we thus arrive at the tranquillity of the Christian faith, the more prompt and therefore the more pleasing is the homage that we render unto God's faithfulness.

And there is nought in the freeness of the

gospel, that should cheapen or degrade the honours of the law. For in reference to those who do accept the offer of its immunities, Christ hath made ample provision for all their offences and indignities against the law of God, by taking upon Himself the burden of their atonement. And in reference to those who decline the offer, against them the law still reserves the right of its entire vindication. Those penalties, which, by fleeing to Christ, they might have evaded, will all be discharged upon them; and the frown of offended majesty will gather into tenfold darkness, because, to the provocation of a broken commandment, they have added the further provocation of a despised and rejected amnesty. Their first blow was at the sceptre of Heaven's authority; and for this they have incurred condemnation. Their second blow is at the sceptre of Heaven's clemency; and for this they seal their condemnation, and make it irreversible. It is most true, that, by the constitution of the gospel, there is a free and willing dispensation of mercy to all who will; and the vilest of sinners may at the instant, set himself down under the shadow of it, and be safe. Some have listened to its call, and the law has not been degraded by their justification—for in the person and sacrifice of Christ, the amplest of all indemnities has been rendered to it. And many have been unheeding of the call, and neither in them has the law been degraded or brought to shame—for the justice of God will only burn the more fiercely, because the voice of His compassion has been lifted up in vain. In very proportion to the tenderness

of that slighted call which came forth from the mercy-seat, will be the force and the power of that anger which shall descend from the throne of judgment on the still unreclaimed hosts of the rebellious. The more rich the provision of grace is, the more fell and hopeless will be the condemnation of those guilty who have spurned it away from them. If the herald of forgiveness have made full and open proclamation, the executioner of vengeance who comes after him, will on that account break forth in the uttermost of his fury on all whom he finds to be still standing on the ground of defiance. Should the sacredness of God have appeared to let itself down by a proposal of fellowship with sinners,—tremendous will be the reaction of His offended dignity on those sinners, who shall refuse to entertain it. The very greatness of the offered deliverance will be the sorest aggravation to the doom of those who have met it with repulse and indignity—for how can they escape, when they neglect so great a salvation?

Such an economy is at one with the most familiar and recognised principles that are current in human society. The man who has been insulted and defrauded by another, and has suffered the provocation of many sore and repeated injuries at his hand, is admitted to have a direct claim of redress and reparation. But should he forbear the prosecution of the claim—should he, in the tenderness of his nature towards the individual who had aggrieved him, stifle the vindictive propensities of his heart, and give way to a pitying sensation in behalf of himself and his family—should he, by a

movement of generosity, hold out the right hand of fellowship, and assure the author of all his wrongs, that still his only desire was for peace, and his only purposes were those of yet unquelled kindness and regard for him—should he, though the offended party, come down so far as to entreat a reconciliation; and to protest, in the voice of a supplicant, his readiness to forgive all and to forget all—Who among you does not feel from the workings of his own bosom, that, though it were possible to stand out the provocation of direct and multiplied offences, yet to stand out the provocation of trampling under foot the despised and derided clemency that has been so generously awarded may not be possible? The malice, and the calumny, and the injustice of the man, may all be borne with; but the contempt, and the carelessness wherewith he hears of the offered pardon, or eyes the advances of a wished-for and attempted reconciliation—this cannot be borne with. The power of sufferance may have been tried beyond the limit of that uttermost compression whereof it is capable—but when at length it does break forth in the might of its elasticity; and overleaps all those barriers of restraint, within which the angry passions of nature lay struggling, as in the bosom of a volcano—who does not see that the patience and the long-suffering, which were in the mind of the long unwearied benefactor, and above all the message of forgiveness which proceeded from his lips—who does not see that these are the very causes which enhance the guilt of the scorner, the very elements which bring the most overwhelming discharge upon him?

And this is the very evolution which takes place under the economy of the gospel. You are now beseeched by the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. In a little while, and you may run to hide yourselves from the wrath of the Lamb. To-day, if you will hear His voice, the goodness of God would lead you unto repentance. But if, in the hardness of thine impenitent heart, the touch of a practical impulse be quite unfelt by you, then is there another day which is called the day of the righteous judgments of God. • There is not a hearer now present, who is not honestly invited to kiss the Son while He is in the way—but, along with the invitation, he must also take the alternative, that time is short; and the way of reconcilation will soon be closed against him; and the Son of God, instead of being found in that way, will be seated on a throne of judgment, whence His wrath shall speedily begin to burn against all who have failed compliance with Him. You have first set at nought the authority of the law; but this is a controversy that might still be settled. But if you now set at nought the grace of the gospel, this will be the consummation of your injuriousness towards God and the breach between Him and you will be wholly irreparable. You first took from Him the tables of a holy commandment, and these to your own condemnation, you have broken. He then stretched forward the olive branch of forgiveness; and you, by your unconcern, may now lay upon it the most degrading mockery. It is this which gives the force and the operation of a two-edged sword to the preaching of the gospel; and, while the savour of life unto life

to all who will, it is this which makes it the savour of death unto death to all who will not. In proportion as the unrelenting sinner is plied now with the looks and the language of tenderness, will he have to brook then the glances of a fiery indignation; and that grace which were sufficient here to efface the whole guilt wherewith his nature is so deeply and inveterately tainted, will, if turned away from, but aggravate there the reproach and the reckoning of a God of vengeance.

You may now see how it is that the law and the gospel, instead of thwarting or obliterating each other in the exercise of their respective functions, reflect on the provinces of both the greatest possible force of illustration. In looking towards them, we may say with the apostle, behold then the goodness and the severity of God; and, instead of these in a state of conflict, each, by every new exercise, strengthening that wall of demarcation by which the territory of the other is guarded from all violence. Should a sinner, pursued by the terrors of the one, take refuge among the promises of the other—he does not thereby defraud the law of its challengeable rights; but renders to it in fact the greatest possible homage, by bowing unto Him, who, in honour of the law, bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. Or if the sinner stand out in defiance to the threat of the law, and be alike indifferent to the promises of the gospel—then does the latter still leave him in the hands of the former. The gospel does not strip the law of a single prerogative; and, instead of harbouring the renegado who would trample upon both, the rejected mercy

of the one unites with the incensed justice of the other, in giving tenfold force to the penalties of a broken commandment.

But Nature is alike blind to the reality of both. In the gospel it takes no delight; and from the law it finds no disturbance. The voice of remorse, and the voice of mercy, are alike unheeded. The open gates of Hell and of Heaven, which lie on the other side of death, are hidden, as if by an impalpable screen, from the eye of the senses; and with every man who is still unawakened, they are equally hidden from his spiritual eye. One might conceive, that, by a partial unfolding of the screen, the way which leadeth from this world to the place of the accursed opened first on the view of the beholder; and then should we witness conscious guilt in its state of remorse and restlessness and alarm—till the screen had been further unfolded; and the way that leadeth to the place of the redeemed, floating with the signals of invitation and announcing itself to be accessible to all, stood revealed to the eye of the earthly traveller. And this is a process that is oft exemplified on those, who are called out of darkness into marvellous light. But often too the intercepting veil is at once lifted away; and both the danger and the deliverance are made palpable alike to the soul, now ushered for the first time into a scene of manifestation; and no sooner are the thunders of an outraged law heard by the spiritual ear, than are heard along with it the glad tidings and assurances of the gospel; and, with both in your full contemplation at once, might you be urged to a choice between the death and the

life that are set forth evidently before you. They are both placed beside each other in the text, which suggests to the reader, at one and the same time, the greatness of the ruin, and the greatness of the deliverance therefrom. It makes a dread of the one, the instrument for shutting up unto the other; and urges the alternative of the coming wrath, as the reason on which we ought to flee to the hope set before us in the gospel. For how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

And it is observable, that the purpose for which the greatness of the salvation is here argued, is to vindicate a heavier doom on all those who shall live and die in the negligence thereof. After such an offer being rejected, their blood remaineth on their own heads. God wipeth His hands of them; and what more, may He well say, could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it? Had there been no way of escape pointed out to you, it might not have been so easy to answer the complaints of the sinner against God. But now that a way at once so palpable and so free has been provided, and provided too for all under the economy of the gospel—when, in lack of all righteousness of his own, the righteousness of Christ is held out even to the chief of sinners, that he may put it on and appear before God invested in its honours and crowned with its everlasting rewards—when invited, as he most truly and tenderly is, to wash out his guilt in the blood of a satisfying atonement; and, delivered at once from the fear and the shame of an accusing conscience, to walk in the land of the living with the erect confidence of him who never had

offended—when plied with the demonstrations of a Father's love, that hath been made to beam upon the world from a Saviour's countenance, and to descend upon it in softest utterance from a Saviour's lips—when the oath, and the protestation, and the assurance of welcome and goodwill, and the widely-sounding call of look unto me all ye ends of the earth and be saved; when these are hung out to view in the indelible record of God's own testimony —when He hath thus embarked, and in the sight too of men and of angels, the credit of His honesty, on the fulfilment of the promise, that, if you will but close with Christ and accept of Him as He is offered to you in the gospel, you will receive along with Him an unfailing protection upon earth and a blissful eternity in Heaven—when things of mighty import as these are rung from sabbath to sabbath in your hearing; and every day of the week solicit your notice, through bibles or ministers or the various remembrancers of Him who hath not left Himself without a witness in the world—O tell us how you can pass through the ordeal of the coming judgment, if it shall be found, that, deaf and listless and wilful in the midst of all these encouragements, you still would grovel in the depths of your own sin and your own sordidness—moved by no terror in the threats of vengeance, and by no allurement in the offered friendship of God.

And what is it that makes you feel so reckless and so bravely independent? Do you really think yourselves in a state which it will do to die in? Would no misgiving sense of unpreparedness come over your heart, did you but once find yourselves

in good earnest on the margin of eternity? Can you seriously imagine of God's law, that its honours can be compromised—or of God himself, that He can be mocked with impunity by a creature who his whole life long has turned him to his own way? Tell us honestly, whether the peace of your now deep and settled unconcern, is that of a man who has blinked the question of his eternity, and so left it unresolved—or that of a man who has sifted and scrutinized it in all its bearings, and at length placed it on the footing that will rightly uphold him in security through life, and keep him firm and undismayed under the agonies of his death-bed? What! can you lay your hand upon your heart, and say that there is nothing there which might well make the death and the judgment and the eternity to be thoughts of fearfulness; or bold in the sense of your own integrity, could you now stand the reckoning of a holy God without a gospel and without a Saviour? Are you not aware of sin, that it has deranged the whole of the relationship between you and God; and is it not true, that this is the strong though secret jealousy, under which you would fain escape the contemplation of His presence, or tremble at the thought of Him as of an enemy who was armed to destroy you? And whether is it for Him the offended party, or for you the offender, to find out the adjustment of this sore controversy; and to dictate the terms and the treaty of reconciliation? Or, should He, in pity to our fallen world, stoop from the heights of His affronted majesty, and again beckon to His own realms of love and of purity its hapless wanderers—tell me

is it for you to quarrel with that path of access which He has prescribed, or strong in the testimony of an unappalled conscience, to say that you want no salvation and stand in need of no mediatorship.

But we cannot think of any here present, that, with minds thus made up, they can bid their whole-hearted defiance to the invitations of the gospel. They do know that all is not right about them. They do feel that many are the bible texts which look hard at them. They are aware of God as a Lawgiver; and how it is that He can both be just and a Saviour, is a knot of difficulty in their minds, which, till resolved, leaves the question of their eternity at abeyance. There is the impression of a barrier between Him who sitteth on the throne and their own persons, which to them at least is insuperable. And perhaps at one time or other, the thought may have come over their hearts—what a mighty enlargement were this barrier done away, and the sore burden of this heavy and helpless alienation were disposed of, and all remembrance of our sins were expunged for ever, and the gate of a secure and blissful Heaven were open to receive us, and we heard the shouts of welcome gratulation on bending our footsteps thitherward. What a contrast to the things and the influences which are now around us, could we find it only thus—and we, in full and confident march to immortality, knew the Saviour to be our friend, and God to be rejoicing over us. Well then my brethren; and is this the translation into a state of betterness that your fancy ever dwelt upon, and has longed to realise? This thing on which you are so intensely set, is the

very thing that the gospel hath spread out before you. By what mistake is it, that you and the gospel of Jesus Christ have not found their way to each other sooner? What you so vehemently wish, He hath accomplished. His right arm hath brought for you the whole of this salvation; and now it is finished, and lies ready at this moment for your acceptance. Why stand you thus in vain and fruitless aspirations, after a matter that is already secured—and which now you are simply invited to lay hold of? Grant that you are a sinner above all the sinners on the face of the earth—still the blood of Christ overmatches the virulence of your guilt; and the open path of access that He has consecrated, you also are welcome to walk upon; and God who waiteth to be gracious, only waiteth for your trust in His mercy through the atonement of the cross, that He may treat you mercifully. And even now may you strike an agreement with the God whom you have offended; and make a final escape from all future vengeance, and from all your present forebodings, by fleeing for refuge unto Christ Jesus and laying hold of His great salvation.

SERMON IV.

THE RELATION OF THE LAW TO THE GOSPEL.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."—ROMANS x. 4.

"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."—I TIMOTHY i. 5.

I. THE law of God may be viewed in a twofold aspect—either as that by which, when we imbibe the virtues that it enjoins, we build up and beautify a personal character; or as that by which, when we satisfy the demands that it prefers, we acquire a title both to the full enjoyment of its rewards and to a full exemption from its penalties. There is a distinction here, which, if steadily kept in view, would, we are persuaded, prove a safeguard, both against the errors of legality, and the equally pernicious errors of antinomianism. The subject is truly an important one; for we reckon, that the whole economy of the gospel is pervaded by it—nor can we think of a likelier expedient for the illustration of the evangelical system, than just to lay hold of the distinction that we have now announced in its principle, and then follow it out into its legitimate applications.

First then, when the law is viewed in relation to the righteousness which constitutes the title to its rewards; then, when we strive to make this out by

our own obedience, the aim is to possess ourselves of a legal right to the kingdom of Heaven. It is our object to render an adequate price for that glorious inheritance; and that the value given in the worth of our performances, shall be equal to the value received, in the worth of that eternal blessedness which we labour to realise. We proceed on the imagination of a contract between God and man—whereof the counterpart terms are a fulfilment of the law's requisitions upon the one side, and a bestowment of the law's rewards upon the other. The one is the purchase money—the other is the payment. They stand related to each other, as work does to wages. Obedience is the allotted task—Heaven is the stipulated hire. When this is the conception present to the mind, the going about to establish our own righteousness, is just going about to establish our own right to immortal happiness. And like as the servant who hath accomplished his term or his task, can challenge from his master on earth the covenanted recompense—so is it figured by many, that, after the course of virtue in this life is ended, he who hath acquitted himself of its achievements and its toils, may challenge from his Master in Heaven that everlasting life, which, under the law of "do this and live," is held out as the reward of obedience.

Now this spirit of legality, as it is called, is nearly the universal spirit of humanity. It is not Judaism alone, it is Nature. They are not the Israelites only who go about to establish a righteousness of their own. The very same thing may be detected among the religionists of all countries

and all ages. Their cleaving and constant tendency is to bargain for Heaven by their services—nor can they easily rid themselves of this mercantile imagination. When they attempt a career of righteousness, it is to establish a right. It is to win their salvation by merit—just as any labourer wins the remuneration that he has wrought for. It is to constitute a claim, which they might prefer at the court of the Divine Lawgiver, in plea of payment—and which payment is held to consist, in the favour of God; and admission to those realms of bliss, where He reigns and holds unceasing jubilee, among the choirs and companies of the celestial. This is the obstinate tendency of nature, charged in the Apostle's days upon the ignorance of the Israelites—but certainly such an ignorance, as mere doctrine or mere information cannot dissipate. There is in fact a legal disposition in the heart, which keeps its ground against all the articles and demonstrations of orthodoxy; and, long after that jurisprudence hath made most clear and conclusive argument of the utter shortness of human virtue, yet will man as if by the bias of a constitutional necessity, recur to the old legal imagination, of this virtue being a thing of desert, and of Heaven being the reward which is due to it.

And certain it is, that for man to establish a right by his righteousness, is in the face of all jurisprudence. When this is the object after which he strives, he indeed spends his labour after that which is nought—wearying and wasting himself on a thing impracticable. If there be one characteristic of the law of God more distinct and more

declared than another, it is the resolute, the unbending assertion, which it makes of its own authority; and, in virtue of which, it will stoop to no compromise with human disobedience. There is in this respect a high state and sovereignty in the divine government, from which it is impossible that it ever can descend. There might in some other way be acceptance for the sinner; but never by the admission of the sinner's right to the rewards of a law which he hath violated. This is a position, which, whether in the dispensation of the Old or in the dispensation of the New Testament, never once is receded from. Both the law and the gospel alike disown man's legal right to the rewards of eternity; and if he be too proud to disown it himself, he remains both a victim of condemnation by the one, and a helpless a hopeless outcast from the mercy of the other. If man will persist, as nature strongly inclines him, in seeking to make out a title-deed to Heaven by his own obedience, then that obedience must be perfect,—else there is a flaw in the title-deed, which is held to be irreparable. It is thus that the law of Heaven, looks down upon Earth, in the firm the unfaltering aspect of its own inflexibility; and that if man seeks, in establishing a righteousness, to establish a right—it forthwith becomes a question of equity; and the principles of strict, absolute, unchanging equity, are brought rigidly and relentlessly to bear upon him. On the moment that the element of a right is introduced into the question between God and man; then man instead of sueing for Heaven in the attitude of a petitioner for mercy, is demanding it

in the attitude of a claimant for justice—and the law accepts of his challenge upon his own terms. The two parties are confronted together on the ground of equity and truth; and the matter will be decided on considerations proper to that ground, and upon no other. If man, on the one hand, have presumptuously lifted himself up to a claim, that is above the merits of his obedience—the law, on the other hand, will not, on that account, let itself down beneath the level of its own demands and its own declarations. Man hath braved the combat upon an arena of his own choosing; and it is by the rules of that arena, that his fate must be determined. He hath appealed unto Cæsar, and to Cæsar he must go. He hath made mention of his right; and, by the very term, he hath committed his cause to a tribunal of justice. He hath sisted himself before God as a lawgiver—even the God who says that He will not be mocked; and that the law which hath proceeded out of His mouth, can no more be nullified or brought to shame, than can the truth and righteousness of the Godhead.

It is thus, that, in seeking to establish a right by his righteousness, he finds that even if he have but committed one sin—there is the barrier of what may be called a moral necessity in his way, which it is impossible to force. The God who cannot lie, cannot recall the utterance which Himself hath made against the children of iniquity; and He hath denounced a curse, upon every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of His law to do them. And so it is, that every sinner who goes about to establish a righteousness of his

own, is either borne down by the misgivings of a conscience which only serves to haunt and paralyze him; or he lives at ease, because living in the delusion of a vain and groundless security. For one of two things must happen. Either with a high and therefore a just conception of the standard of the law, he will be dispirited and sink into despair; or, with a low conception of that standard, he, though but grovelling among the mere decencies of civil life or the barren formalities of religious service, will aspire no farther and yet count himself safe.

Now herein lies the grand peculiarity of the gospel. It pronounces on the utter insignificance of all that man can do for the establishment of his right to the kingdom of Heaven; and yet, he must be somehow or other provided with such a right, ere that he can find admittance there. It holds out eternal life to him, not on the footing of a simple gratuity—but in return for, and on the consideration of a righteousness. His own righteousness it most pointedly and peremptorily refuses to entertain as that consideration; and makes throughout all its pages, the total the unqualified denial of the efficacy of human virtue, when directed to the end of substantiating upon its own merits a title or a legal claim to the rewards of immortality. This no doubt was one great and primary end of the law—even that man, by the fulfilment of its requisitions, might obtain for himself a right to its rewards. But this end of the law, man hath hopelessly frustrated by his own disobedience. He hath entirely forfeited the right; and he cannot re-establish

it, with all his strenuousness. And yet he would fain make the trial. It is that to which nature is constantly prompting him. There is an inveteracy in the legal spirit—so that it remains unquelled by the declarations of the gospel from without, however responded to from within, by the depositions of a conscience, that cannot but feel the shortness and the insufficiency of all our obedience. It is in opposition to this legal spirit, that the worthlessness, the absolute nullity of all human virtue, is, in the records of the evangelical dispensation, affirmed so constantly; and that the same doctrine is so zealously repeated, by the faithful and orthodox ministers of that dispensation. That righteousness of his own, wherewith man would proudly array and set himself forward as a claimant for Heaven, the Bible, with all honest and fearless expounders of the Bible, pronounces upon as filthy rags; and nothing can exceed the terms of degradation, in which it stigmatizes, nay vilifies all human righteousness, when ought like a right is founded thereupon.

Still without the investiture of a legal right, man obtains no part nor possession in the inheritance above. It is not by an act of mercy alone, that the gate of Heaven is opened to the sinner. With his entry there, there is in some way or other, a merit associated. It is not enough that he appears with a petition at the bar of mercy. He must be furnished with a plea, which he can state at the bar of justice—not, it would appear, the plea of his own deservings, which we have already found that the gospel holds no terms with; and therefore with

a plea, founded solely and exclusively on the deservings of another. Now what we reckon to be the very essence of the gospel, is, the report which it brings to a sinful world of a solid and satisfying plea; and that every sinner is welcome to the use of it. In defect of his own righteousness, which he is required to disown, as having any part in his meritorious acceptance with God, he is told of an everlasting righteousness which another has brought in; and which he is invited, nay commanded, to make mention of. It is thus that Christ becomes the end of the law for righteousness, that is for a justifying righteousness, or for a righteousness which gives a right to him who possesses it. This end of the law we have fallen short of; for we could have only achieved it for ourselves by our perfect and unfailing obedience. Christ therefore hath achieved it for us. He hath for us, by his sacrifice, borne the penalties of the law. He hath for us, by his obedience, won the rewards of the law. And, by the constitution of the gospel, every one who believeth is on this high vantage ground. He is as much exempted from the denounced vengeance of a broken law, as if in his own person he had already borne it. He is as much secured in the stipulated recompense of an observed law, as if in his own person he had rendered a full and faultless observation. He has attained an interest in the righteousness of Christ by faith; and with this he has attained the end of the law for righteousness.

And so this righteousness by faith, is the frequent, the favourite theme, of evangelical ministers.

It may indeed be called the Shibboleth of their preaching. They are men who exalt to the uttermost the righteousness by faith. And they are men who degrade to the uttermost the righteousness by works. But let it be distinctly kept in view, that it is in respect of its sufficiency for the establishment of a valid right to Heaven that they exalt the one—and only in respect of its insufficiency for the establishment of this right, that they so depreciate the other. And this, not because, as many do imagine, of the low; but truly because of the high estimation in which virtue is held by them. They first look to the law, that pure and perfect exemplar of all righteousness—and there they learn what a noble and elevated and perfect thing, is that morality which it prescribes to us. They then look to the actual state of human obedience; and just in proportion to their lofty estimation of virtue in itself, is their lowly estimation of virtue in man. It is just because so alive to the worth of virtue, that they are so alive to the worthlessness of man; and the higher their regards are cast towards its supreme excellency, the lower must actual humanity appear in their eyes, as beneath the standard from which human virtue has so immeasurably fallen. They have indeed a very humble reckoning of what men are, but only because they have a very exalted reckoning of what men ought to be; and, so far from these advocates for the righteousness of faith having lost all sense of morality or of its importance, they have fled to this righteousness as their only refuge, just because a reverence for morality exists so purely and so sacredly in their

bosoms. Why is it, that they prefer that righteousness of Christ which faith trusts in, as their only argument for Heaven, to that righteousness of man which is yielded by the obedience of works, and on which so many would found as their pretension and their plea for the rewards of Heaven's blessedness? It is just because they see perfection in the one righteousness, and pollution in the other—in the one an adequate tribute to the sovereignty of the law, and therefore a full and finished right to its rewards; in the other all the worthlessness of a lame and imperfect offering, and on which therefore no right can be alleged without violence to the law's incensed dignity. These surely are not the men, among whom all sense of morality lies extinct and prostrate in their bosoms. There appears rather to be the very strength and spirit of a moral essence in that doctrine which they hold; and it seems the fruit of their more adequate homage to the law, that, under the feeling of their own distance and deficiency therefrom, they have laid hold upon Christ as the end of the law for righteousness.

II. But this though one, is not the only end of the law. It had another and a distinct object, from that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a right to its promised rewards—even that of holding out a method, by which we might acquire a rightness of character, in the cultivation and the exercise of its bidden virtues. The legal right which obedience confers is one thing. The personal rightness which obedience confers is

another. For the first object the law has now become useless; and, having fallen short of personal righteousness ourselves, we must now find our legal right only in the righteousness of Christ. For the latter object, the law still retains all the use and all the importance which it ever had. It is that written tablet, on which are inscribed the virtues of the Godhead; and we, by copying these on the tablet of our own characters, are restored to the image of Him who created us. We utterly mistake the design and economy of the gospel, if we think—that, while the first function of the law has been superseded under the new dispensation, the second has been superseded also; or because the penalties of our old disobedience are now done away, the precepts of our new obedience are therefore dispensed with. Obedience for a legal right is everywhere denounced in the New Testament, as a presumptuous and vain enterprise. Obedience for a personal rightness, is everywhere urged in the New Testament, as an enterprise, the prosecution of which forms the main business of every disciple; and the full achievement of which is that prize of his high calling, to which he must press forward continually. For the one end, the law has altogether lost its efficacy; and we, in our own utter inability to substantiate its claims, must seek to be justified only by the righteousness of Christ. For the other end, the law retains its office as a perfect guide and exemplar of all virtue; and we, empowered by strength from on high to follow its dictates, must seek to be sanctified by the transference of its bidden godliness, and its bidden charity, and its

bidden uprightness, upon our own characters. Human virtue hath ceased, under the economy of grace, to be the price of Heaven—for this power it lost, and lost irrecoverably, by its ceasing to be perfect. But human virtue is still the indispensable preparation for Heaven; and we, helped from the sanctuary above, to struggle with all the imperfections of our corrupt and carnal nature below, must, by a life of prayer and painstaking and all duteous performance, make way through the frailties and temptations of our sinful state in time, to a meetness for the joys of that endless inheritance which is beyond it. It is no longer the purchase-money, by which to buy your right of entry or admittance into the marriage supper of the Lamb. But it is the wedding garment, without which you will never be seated among the beatitudes of that glorious and immortal festival. To be meet in law, and without violence done to the jurisprudence of Heaven, we must be invested by faith with the righteousness of Christ. To be meet in character, and without offence or violence to the spirit or the taste of Heaven's society, we must be invested with the graces of our own personal righteousness.

But thus it is, that the ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ have been so grievously misunderstood. They strenuously affirm of human virtue, that it has no place in our title-deed to the Jerusalem above. And therefore, they have been charged with denying it that place, which it invariably and essentially has in the hearts and natures of all who enter therein. Because they have disjoined it from the legal claim, the imagination is that they have also disjoined it

from the personal character—or because not permitted to be set forth and blazoned in a title-deed, that therefore it needs not by their theology, to have a residence or a being in the souls of believers.

And not only have these faithful expounders of the New Testament been charged with hostility to the cause of personal righteousness; but the New Testament itself has been charged with inconsistency upon this subject. There is a felt puzzle in the minds of men, in consequence of its apparently opposite representations on the importance of good works, and on the place and consideration which they should be made to occupy in the system of the gospel—denounced at one time as insignificant and worthless, demanded at another as indispensable to all true discipleship. The explanation is, that they are available for one end, but they are unavailable for another. They avail not for justification. They are inseparable from sanctification. They confer no right to the favour of God; but they enter as constituents into that rightness, without which no man shall see His face. They now possess no importance whatever in the covenant between God and man. They still possess a supreme importance in the character of both—the just and beneficent works of the Deity, being the fruits or the emanations of His innate personal righteousness; and our works of the same or a similar kind, being in like manner the fruits of that inborn personal righteousness, which, imprest upon us by the Holy Spirit, renews us after the image, and fits us for the everlasting society of Him who created us. The works of a believer

are short of perfection; and therefore short of that end for which the law is now superseded, and Christ is substituted in its place—even the end of making good our right by our righteousness. But the works of every believer are growing up, and carrying him forward to perfection; and for this end, the law still retains the office of a guide and of a stimulant—even the end of making good a seemly and a suitable character, for that land of perfect love and perfect sacredness, where the servants of God for ever serve Him. We never can by our most strenuous observation of the law, arrive at a juridical or a forensic right to Heaven. But it is just by our observation of the law, as a law of piety and purity and equity and kindness, that we arrive at that personal righteousness, which makes us meet for Heaven's exercises and Heaven's joys—the exercises of a morality that is then faultless, the joys of a then complete and unsullied virtue. Virtue when regarded as composing that assemblage of personal qualities which we must carry with us to Heaven, has all the paramount importance which it ever had. And so while by one passage of the New Testament, the law in reference to the former end is set aside, and Christ put in its room—by another passage, the law in reference to the latter end is retained; and we accordingly read that "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

We have deemed it necessary to say thus much in vindication, for the advocates and expounders of that system which is commonly known by the name of "the evangelical." They are still much

misconceived and misrepresented in general society —as men whose preaching is injurious to the cause of good morals, and whose doctrine sheds a withering mildew over the virtues of our population. Their doctrine is manifestly popular; but the imagination of many is, that this is because impunity and indulgence for sin are popular. Even the semblance of a pure moral indignation does mix itself occasionally with this antipathy to the gospel of Jesus Christ; and so forms part of that subtle delusion, which alienated from evangelical preaching, the respect of many of the most intelligent, as well as the patronage of the most influential in our land.

Let us conclude these remarks with two distinct particulars. First then know, that the legal right is what you cannot work for; but that in the gospel of Jesus Christ it is freely offered for your acceptance. The very essence, we apprehend, of the gospel, lies in this offer. We there read of the gift of righteousness; or that gift, by which there is conveyed to you, the privilege of a rightful admittance into Heaven. Be assured that you waste your efforts on a hopeless impracticability, when you labour to win this privilege for yourselves. Receive Christ by faith; and lay a confident hold on the propitiation made by that Saviour, who "became sin for you although he knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But secondly—having thus secured what the apostle in one passage calls the end of the law; count it your unceasing business, to labour for what

the apostle in another passage calls the end of the commandment. Though the law has ceased as a covenant, it has not ceased as a rule of life. Though it can no longer be the instrument by which you shall obtain a legal plea for Heaven, it is still the instrument by which you shall obtain that preparation which is as indispensable as a plea—even the preparation of Heaven's character and of Heaven's virtue. Greatly do they mistake the whole design and economy of the gospel, who think that it brings any exemption from the services of righteousness along with it. There is in truth a busier and a more abundant service than before; and the only distinction is, that, whereas under the one dispensation you served in the oldness of the letter, under the other dispensation you serve in the newness of the spirit. The obedience now is of a more refined and pure and exalted character, than ever was obedience then. It is obedience altogether divested of that mercenary character, which never ceases to adhere to it, so long as viewed legally, it is regarded but as the term of a bargain. Instead of a constrained stipulation, it becomes a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty; and, proceeding as it does from the new taste and desire of a heart now emancipated from the bondage and the terror of a felt condemnation, it is as unlike to what it formerly was, as the obedience of a seraph is unlike to that of a slave. And be assured, that, unless this new obedience is entered on, you have no part nor interest in the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel which bringeth salvation, bringeth a present salvation, as well as a future one; and they who are the

subjects of it, are under promise of deliverance from the power of sin here, as well as have the assured prospect of deliverance from the punishment of sin hereafter. O let us then do honour to the faith that we profess, by our abounding in those fruits of righteousness which emanate therefrom. And never let gainsayers have to allege of that holy name by which we are called, that it is prostituted by those who wear it, into a license for iniquity. Let the faith of the gospel approve itself in our hearts, to bring along with it the charm and the efficacy of a new moral existence. And in our individual case, let the mystery be realised of our not boasting in the works of the law as forming our rightful claim for Heaven, and yet of our having become the workmanship of God and our being created in Christ Jesus unto good works—so as that they form the very business and ornament of our lives. Thus shall our light shine before men, and others seeing our good works shall glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

SERMON V.

ON FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

"Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—ACTS xx. 21.

IT has been made a great question among theologians, whether faith or repentance comes first? Now though, practically, faith on the one hand has a great influence upon repentance; and, on the other hand, repentance has also a great influence upon faith—yet we do not hold it indispensable to make a full settlement, or a full statement, in your hearing, of the order of precedency between them. Did we attempt fully to propound this argument here, we should find that altogether it was a great deal too subtle for the pulpit; and we therefore satisfy ourselves for the present with the following deliverance. No man can begin either the work of faith, or the work of repentance, too soon; and he should not wait for the one, ere the other shall be entered on. There should be no putting off, for the sake of any adjustment of this sort. If told to believe, he should stir up all that is in him—whether much or little—all that is already in him, that he might flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the gospel. If told to repent, he should also stir up all that is in him, that he might

haste and make no delay to keep the commandment. When he hears the tidings of great joy, his duty is to entertain them. When he hears the call of turning unto God, his as instant duty is to cease to do evil and learn to do well. We shall not therefore discuss the order of these two christian graces; but, falling in with the actual order set before us by the apostle in the text, present you, first with our observations on repentance towards God, and secondly with our observations on faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the same apostle, who, in describing how it was that he executed the message wherewith he had been entrusted, tells us of his having showed both to Jews and Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God and do works meet for repentance.

I. To repent of sin, is something more than grieve for it. It is to turn from it. It is something more than to regret your sins—it is to renounce them. Repentance may begin with sorrow, but it does not end there. Sorrow of itself is not repentance; it only works repentance. And he alone fulfils this work, who gives up the evil of his doings, and enters with full purpose of heart on a life of new obedience.

We have just adverted to the question, whether faith or repentance comes first. And there has been another question stirred—which part of repentance comes first, or which part is it that comes before the other. Does it not first begin with the heart, and then take effect upon the history? Must not the work commence with the desires of the

inner man; and then go forth in regular order, so as to tell on the deeds of the outer man? And is it not preposterous, some have imagined, to urge on our hearers the palpable reformation of their conduct, ere we have made sure that a process of regeneration within has really been entered on? We answer, no; and we think that in this matter a sensitive and misapplied orthodoxy has done a great deal of mischief, and that the systems and speculations of theology have been often so conducted as greatly to embarrass and to cast entanglements on the practical work of christianization. What we have said before, we say again. As much as lies in them let every man believe as he can, and let every man also repent as he can. It is not preposterous, it is in the order of nature, and there is nothing contrary to it in the order of grace that men should be called upon at the very outset of their repentance, and, as if it were the first footstep of their enterprise on which they had embarked, to give up the evil of their ways and the evil of their doings and to put their palpable iniquities away from them. This plain business ought not to be suspended on any controversy, about what man can do, or what he cannot do. The terrors of the law can restrain a thief from open depredations; and why might he not be adjured by the terrors of the Lord, to give up his secret purloinings or his midnight robberies? The shame of exposure will keep many a transgressor from the indulgence of licentiousness in the face of day; and why might he not be told, on the dread solemnities of that coming judgment when many shall awaken to shame

and everlasting contempt, to give up all the abominable works of darkness? If told of poison in the cup, however otherwise alluring to his taste, the most inveterate of drunkards would stay his ravenous appetite, and show he had the power to refrain from it; and why might not the same power be manifested and put forth, when told, that, by every new act of intoxication, he nourisheth within his heart the worm that dieth not—he kindles into greater fierceness that fire which never shall be quenched? If the prospect of the malefactor's cell, and the execution which follows, be that which terrifies many thousands in society from the perpetration of crimes against the state—might not the prospect of that living lake, the lake of agony and vengeance, into which all the children of iniquity will be cast, have the like effect in terrifying men from their disobedience and their daring criminalities against the majesty of Heaven's Lawgiver? In preaching repentance then, let us strike an immediate blow, and sound an immediate alarm against all the deeds of human wickedness. We even now then, and without waiting for any order of precedency, as for principles first and performances afterwards—we even now call for such performances as ye can set your hand to; and that though, at the first shaking of the dry bones, we should behold nothing else than the deeds of an outward reformation. Still we bid, and that too their instant their peremptory compliance, when we tell the thief to give up his depredations; and the drunkard to give up his riotous excesses; and the impure to give up his secret abominations; and

the unfair dealer to give up his dishonesties; and the undutiful son or daughter to give up their contempt and disobedience of parents; and the liar to give up his falsehoods, and his frauds; and the swearer to give up his daring liberties with the name of God; and the sabbath-breaker to give up his no less daring liberties with the day of God—even that God, who, though he dwelleth in heaven, looketh down upon earth, alike jealous of his day and of his name. Against one and all of these iniquities, we would lift the trumpet and spare not. In reference to one and all of them, we say go and sin no more. There must be no delay, no parrying. It must be the speed of an instantaneous flight, like that of men running for their lives from the awful wrath of God, which is upon the soul of every one that doeth evil. If ye will not forsake these evil doings, the vengeance of Him who is as a consuming fire will overtake you. Repent then even now of all this your wickedness, that is to say, renounce it—else there is not even the beginning of a good change upon you. From this moment cease to do evil, and learn to do works meet for repentance.

We are aware, there is a theology which undervalues these reformations. And the reason is that many are the thousands of human society, who stand in no need of being thus reformed; and yet stand chargeable with all the guilt of nature's enmity, and nature's indifference to God. They are neither fraudulent, nor intemperate, nor profane; but as little, on the other hand, are they godly, or have they in them aught like the love of God, aught like

a sense or a principle of godliness. What signifies, it may be thought, although the thief should give up his stealing, and the drunkard his habits of intoxication—if the whole effect of the change shall be to transform him, into one of those decent moral well-living citizens, who still are but citizens of earth, taking no thought, and feeling no care, either about God or about eternity. But mark well a difference here; and if you ponder it aright, it may perhaps lead the orthodox among you, to have a higher respect than heretofore for that practical preaching,—the first note of whose trumpet, as it were, when sounding the proclamation to the workers of iniquity, is that that iniquity must be abandoned. Mark well we say the difference between the conscience-stricken man, who has ceased to be a drunkard, because the preacher spoke effectually to his conscience and to his fears—and the irreligious man who never was a drunkard, because his constitutional propensities never urged him to the habit, or his aversion to all that is disgraceful and unseemly kept him aloof from it. In the one case of sobriety, we admit that there may be nothing which one can hold to be of any religious value, or put to the account of religion at all. But in the other case of sobriety, it is religion and religion alone that has had to do with it. The man became sober, because the minister told him, and told him truly, that all drunkards should be cast into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone—and he was frightened for his soul. There is all the difference in the world, between the man who has been sober all his days though he never thinks of God, and the man

who has become sober because he is afraid of God —or between the man, who, constitutionally upright and temperate, never once trembled at the thought of hell; and the man who renounces his dissipations and his dishonesties, because this thought has been infixed into his heart by words uttered from the pulpit, and now pursues and agonises him like an arrow sticking fast. It is this which makes a total difference between the two cases, between the one man's sobriety and the other man's sobriety. In deed and in outward description, they form one and the same virtue; but in spirit and character, they are as unlike as possible. There is no religion in the one sobriety. The other sobriety is entered on, under the force of a religious consideration—in the spirit and under the visitation of a religious earnestness. The former is the sobriety of a man who never thinks either of heaven or of hell. The latter is like the first movement of one, who is fleeing from hell and seeking after heaven. It is the first footstep, as it were, of his christian education. God forbid that it should be considered as the whole of it, or that any trembling sinner should have the misfortune to sit under a minister, who can tell him no more than this of the way of salvation. He is but yet at the alphabet of christianity; and let him not learn the alphabet imperfectly, in our hurry to get him onward to the higher lessons of it. He has not yet entered into reconciliation with God; but look to the expression of our text "repentance *towards*"—he is moving towards God, and that is what the man of mere constitutional uprightness, or constitutional sobriety, is not at all thinking of.

He is not yet a citizen of Zion; but leave his conscience to its workings, and let it tell in the reformation of its habits; and he is seeking towards Zion and his face is thitherwards. What he is now doing, and this you cannot say for the other, he is doing unto God. He who said, "a cup of cold water given to a disciple for his sake shall have its reward," will not despise this day of small things. He will not break this bruised reed, nor quench this smoking flax; but at once pities, and is pleased, with this incipient effort of a trembling penitent—this shaking of his dry bones, however proud theology may scowl upon it. The science taught in our halls of divinity may find it a thing of difficult adjustment, and be at a loss what to make of the phenomenon—the external reformation of a man, not yet initiated for aught we know, even in the first principles of orthodoxy; but only, under the impulse of nature's conscience and nature's fears, awakening to a sense of his danger and his guilt, and breaking off from the sins and the profligacies of other days. Now what we say is—let no embarrassment be thrown in that man's way. Nay leave him alone, rather than that his activities should be over-borne under the weight of our ponderous theological systems. Let him not be interrupted in the midst of his doings; nor the dread of legality freeze into a sort of suspended animation, that soul which was awakening in its own way to the reality of eternal things. Let no cabalistic orthodoxy put its restraints upon him—leading him and the world at large, to misapprehend the real character and design of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is to extirpate moral evil from

the earth, and substitute in its place the reign of truth and charity and righteousness.

But the matter does not stop here. Though repentance begins thus, it does not end thus. Christianity is not satisfied with a mere work of external reformation; and, what is more, neither will the man's own conscience be satisfied. Let his be but honest endeavours, and honest fears; and the unavoidable effect will be, that the more he does to obtain peace with his offended God, the more he feels the utter insufficiency of all his doings. The more he rises in his deeds of obedience to the law, the more the law rises in its demands upon him. He may have given up to drink, or to swear, or to speak evil of his neighbour, or to wander abroad in daring profanation on the sabbath; but he is deeply conscious, nay more conscious than ever, that he has not yet compassed the whole length and breadth of the divine commandments. What happened to Paul happens also to him—"But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." The meaning of this is, the commandment came—that is a sense of its purity, of its elevation, of its exceeding height above all the possibilities of human performance, now visited his heart; and this larger view of the commandment, gave him a larger view of his own exceeding distance and deficiency therefrom; and thus sin revived, or a sense of his own exceeding sinfulness was more alive and awake than ever in his bosom; and so he died, or felt more emphatically than ever that the law's condemnation to death was upon him, and that he could not with all his efforts and all his aspirations, make his escape from it.

It is well that he has put the evil of his outward doings away from him. It is well, that, by the shaking of the dead bones, some larger clods, as it were, of earthliness and corruption, have thus been shaken off, and no longer adhere to him. It is very well that the matter has proceeded thus far; and that we can speak of this one external reformation, of that other literal work of obedience. But with all this, he may be a dead man still. The life of obedience may not be there. The love, without which a willing obedience is impossible, may be altogether wanting. The hand may have been compelled, under the influence of terror, to its reluctant task; but the heart refuses to go along with it. Still it is well, that, when the law, with the voice and authority of a school-master, told him to give up this one and that other disobedience, he obeyed the lesson and gave them up accordingly. But this is not the only lesson which the law gives him. It tells him of the uncancelled guilt of his past life, which he can make no atonement for. It tells him of a curse and of a condemnation, which, under the government of a righteous Sovereign, cannot be recalled. It tells him of its own sacredness—the sacredness of the law, and the dread majesty of the lawgiver. It reveals to him heights of obedience, which, to corrupt man, are inaccessible; and lets him know that, toil as he may beneath these heights, he, with all his pains and all his efforts, is but multiplying his transgressions, and becoming every day a deadlier offender than before. It reveals God to him as an enemy and an avenger; and yet bids him love this God—

love the Being, whom, with a just sense of his own sinfulness, he cannot but regard, as he would a strong man armed to destroy him. We repeat it is well that the first lesson should have been listened to, and in some measure obeyed. It forms a sort of guarantee that the other lessons will be of effect also—that the man's conscience will become every day more tender—that he will see more and more of the perfection of God's law, and of his own guiltiness—that, in proportion as he multiplies his doings, he will be made more clearly to perceive the excess of the law's requirements above all that he can do; so that every new day swells the account of his debt and of his deficiency; and, in spite of all his efforts, the conviction grows upon him—that he is a helpless and a hopeless outcast from the favour of God, and from the joys of a blissful eternity. And here the question comes, what is to be the end of this? It is clear that every thing the man does, but aggravates his despair. He is sinking deeper and deeper every day, into an abyss of despondency. His prospects become blacker with every new attempt he makes to relieve himself—fighting as it were against a barrier through which he cannot make his way, while the penalties of an unfulfilled law rise like a wall of fire in threatening array against him. It is perfectly clear, that, with but the one lesson of repentance, there is no getting on. Repentance is a return to that law from which we had departed. But then the law wont recall its own threats of vengeance—it wont cancel its own long and fearful account against us—it wont look on and be silent, while we are taking on new

debts; and by new delinquencies of thought word and deed, come day after day under, a heavier reckoning and responsibility than before. The law is not of that supple pliant accommodating character, not of such a flexible and yielding disposition, so full of complaisance and facility and good-natured connivance—that, for the sake of our convenience, it will let down its own exactions; or become a precarious, nay a polluted thing, by lowering and suiting its precepts to our powers and possibilities of obedience. The law utterly refuses to make any half-way compromise of this sort. It insists, and that most rigidly, on its own terms; and if we have only the law to deal with, we see not how we can fling off the burden and the terror of this awful deliverance from our own persons—"cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of this book to do them." If we have doings with no other party than the law, or with God viewed as a Lawgiver, we are truly placed in a most inextricable dilemma. If we have no other than one lesson to work at, even the lesson of repentance, which is merely coming back again to the law, we are fairly shut up, and that to endless and unescapable despair. But, blessed be God, there is another party beside the law, that we are called upon to do with; and to which the law itself is our conductor and our guide—a school-master for bringing us to Christ, at whose hands we are provided with an outlet and a place of refuge—and we are still shut up no doubt, not to despair however as heretofore, but shut up by the terrors of the law to the faith of the gospel. And, blessed be God, it is not one lesson only

that is prescribed—and that a lesson, to which if we are confined, and without the light breaking in upon us of any other truth or from any other quarter, then the longer we learn at it the more wretched we shall be; but, ever blessed be God, there is another lesson: And the two so fitted, so helpful to each other, that the work of both, when they are thus joined together, goes on most prosperously: And so the same apostle who taught and testified repentance towards God, taught and testified also faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. But it is now high time to enter on this second lesson—a lesson of greatest preciousness. We must be brief in our exposition of it; but let us at the same time be as plain as possible. It is not a lesson that can be set forth advantageously in the wisdom of man's words; nor is it the way of securing its acceptance, that it should be garnished with human eloquence, or made the subject of any tasteful and high-wrought description for the entertainment of the human fancy—when the weight of its own eternal importance should be enough to recommend it, to the attention and the consciences of men. Let us speak to your experience. If laden with debt so enormous and so overwhelming, that the industry of a whole life could work out no sensible abatement of it—if the wages of the day did not even suffice for the expenditure of the day, so that the longer you lived, the claims which justice had against you became every day heavier than before—if thus crushed under a load of accumulating obligations, with no prospect of relief or of

escape from them—We ask you to conceive, with what heart or what alacrity, you could address yourself to the labours of your daily occupation? What an unhappy doom, the doom of a weary, heartless, heavy-laden existence — overtasked — overtoiled—pressed above strength and beyond measure, and yet every day becoming a poorer man than before—the spirit sunken under the consciousness of increasing debt, and the body exhausted by ceaseless and sore drudgery—the whole proceeds of his industry torn from his hands by the gripe of creditors, who, in spite of all their exactions, can yet exhibit, at every week or every month's end, a deadlier count and reckoning than before. How vain to tell that man, to put forth more strength, or give more time or more diligence to the business of his calling—with such a mountain weighing upon him. There is positively no encouragement in these circumstances to industry at all. The heart is made heavy; the hands are slackened; and the whole man, powerless and paralysed, gives himself up to the apathy and the indolence of despair. And yet there is a method by which this wretched and undone being, might be charmed and evoked into a life of activity; and an inspiring energy be put into his heart, that would absolutely make a new creature of him. If that debt were but cleared away—if a kind and able friend were to take it upon himself, and pay the last farthing of it—if a full and free discharge were put into his hand; and he, over and above, were gifted with the means of entering on a walk of sure profit, where, with care and industry on his part, he

could make certain of a competency to himself and a rich inheritance to his family—Who does not see, that, on the moment of being restored to hope, the man is restored to willing and active exertion also? Who does not see, that, when this weight is lifted off, the man goes forth in all the vigour and alacrity of his now emancipated powers—reanimated to industry, because now unshackled from all his encumbrances, and with the prospect of a sufficiency and an independence now set before him? And thus, (God grant that you may not only understand but believe what we say, for we now speak of the matters which belong to the very turning point of a man's salvation) and thus is the debt between us and our lawgiver in Heaven cleared away. The great surety for sinners took it all upon Himself. God laid on Him the iniquities of us all; and He became sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That we might be freed from the curse of the law, did the only beloved Son of God become a curse for us; and on the accursed tree, did He bear the full weight of the condemnation and the penalty, that we, else should have borne. He was stricken for our iniquities. He was smitten for our transgressions. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him; and, in bowing Himself down to the burden of a world's atonement, did He pour out his soul even unto the death for us. In that hour of darkness and mystery, when the great lawgiver wakened the sword of vengeance against His fellow—then it was that our debt was paid to the last farthing; for then it was, that the Captain of our salvation,

drunk to its last dregs that cup which the Father had put into His hands. Then it was, that our discharge was fully made out; and, hearken to us—if ye believe not these tidings of great joy, you remain listless or alienated or heavy laden as before; but oh the power and victory of faith! what a mountain is lifted off by it, and how the sinner's soul breaks forth as if into a land of light and love and liberty, when, enabled to lay hold on Christ, the discharge is put into his hands, and he now rests in the assurance that all is clear with God. And there is a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt; for He not only made an end of transgression but He brought in an everlasting righteousness. Mark the distinctness of these two parts of salvation. The mere blotting out of your sins might have rescued you from Hell; but, alone and of itself and without something more, it would have given you no part of the inheritance that has been purchased for you in Heaven. It might have shut against you the gate of Hell, because ransomed from that awful and everlasting prison house; but it would not have opened the gate of Heaven, that the ransomed of the Lord might enter in. But, blessed be God's eternal Son, He has finished the work which was given Him to do. He has not been satisfied with doing it by halves. He has made out for us a complete salvation. He has not only suffered, but He has served for us; and, instead of leaving us midway between Hell and Heaven, He has done more than redeem us from the one, by His own full endurance of the penalties of that law which we had broken—

He has earned for us the reward of a sure and blissful inheritance in the other, by His own perfect obedience to all the precepts of that Law, which He has magnified and made honourable. Now, observe the whole extent of that relief and that enlargement which He has procured, for all who accept of Him as He is offered in the gospel. There is not only put into their hands, a discharge from that debt which He has paid for them; but there is put into their hands, a title-deed of entry into that glorious and everlasting inheritance, which He has won for them. It were not enough, that, disburdened from debt, you were then left as if to start fair and work out for yourselves the rewards of eternity. Who does not see, that, ere one day rolled over your heads, you would again fall short of the commandment—again dishonour that law, which utterly refuses to dishonour itself, by letting down the standard of its own absolute perfection—again run a new score, as it were, of debt and of deficiency—again become a wretched outcast of condemnation; haunted as before by the perpetual consciousness of your own imperfection; and having no rest to the soles of your feet, because still without any solid foundation of peace or confidence in God. And be assured that you never will know what it is to be fully and firmly at rest—all, as heretofore, will be misgiving and perplexity and despair, till relieved from the task of establishing a righteousness of your own. That was the old stumbling-block of the Jews; and it will prove a stumbling-block to you also, if you set out on the imagination, now that Christ has delivered you from Hell by

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His sufferings, you will earn a right to Heaven by your own services. You must look to Christ for both. You have as much need of the services of Christ for the one, as you have of the sufferings of Christ for the other. You can no more work out a righteousness for yourselves, than you can work out a redemption for yourselves; and accordingly we read of Christ being made unto us righteousness as well as redemption. If you obtain a discharge from Hell, it is not because you have paid the debt; but because Christ hath paid it for you—if you obtain a right of entry into Heaven, it is not because you have performed the requisite obedience; but because Christ hath performed it for you. In a word, you must look for Heaven, not as the wages of your own righteousness, but, alone and altogether, as the wages of the righteousness of Christ. For your deliverance from the coming wrath, trust to the sufficiency of His atonement—for your participation in that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, trust to the sufficiency of His righteousness. And, in answer to the frequent question of the ignorant or the half-informed in the nature of the gospel, who, after the matter is explained thus far are often heard to ask, have we no further concern then with a work of righteousness ourselves; or have we no more to do with the law of God? No more to do with it, as a covenant of works. Nothing whatever to do with it, on the old footing, and under the old legal economy of Do this and live. Absolutely nothing at all to do with it, in the way of building up a plea, a meritorious plea, on which you might challenge a place in the kingdom of

Heaven, or put in a claim for it that shall avail against the judgment of a righteous God. Nothing to do with it, in the purpose and on the principle of deserving Heaven for yourselves; but, mark us well, every thing to do with it in the purpose and on the principle of pleasing Him who has deserved Heaven for you. Christ now stands in the place of the law; and, to use the image of the apostle, you, dissevered from the law, your old husband, are married to another, even Christ; but for what end? —that you may bring forth fruit unto God. Your obedience is as indispensable as before; but then it fulfils a different office from what it should have done before. The purpose of your obedience now, is, not to make you meet in law—Christ has settled all its accounts for you—but the purpose of your obedience now, is to make you meet in person, or meet in character, for Heaven; that you may become like-minded with those who are already there —with God the Father—with Christ, who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—with the unfallen angels, who still retain that resemblance to their Maker in which they were created—with the spirits of just men made perfect, who had lost this resemblance, and were again renewed in righteousness and holiness. And this renewal we must all undergo also. To become the members of Heaven's family, we must acquire the family likeness of Heaven. It is said of Heaven, that it is the land of uprightness; and to be admitted there, you must become upright. It is said of Heaven, there thy servants serve thee; to be admitted there you must become the servants

of God. It is said of Heaven, that nothing which defileth can enter there; and you to be qualified for that entrance, must cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and your holiness must be perfected. It is said of Heaven that its rejoicing inhabitants cease not day nor night to glorify the Father and the Son, insomuch that the high arches of the upper sanctuary ring with jubilee, and loud hosannas fill the eternal regions; and you, to participate in the joys and the exercises of that blissful land, must have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts, and learn in spirit and in truth to worship Him. Finally, it is said of Heaven, that there charity never faileth; and you, to be qualified for sitting down in its celestial company, must know what it is to have a heart that feels for all, and a hand in readiness to succour and to serve all. Justification, so far from being the whole of your Christianity, is but the beginning of it; and so far from Christianity having nothing to do with Sanctification, which is the entire conformity of your heart and life to the law, this sanctification is the great design, the great end of Christianity—the main purpose for which Christ died, even to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. For this object you put yourselves into the hand of the Saviour, and He puts into your hands a busy work of obedience, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." You do not renounce service in passing from the law to the gospel. You only change the principle of the service; and serve now, not with the oldness of the letter, but with the newness of the

spirit. The difference is as great, as between the reluctant submission of a slave, and the prompt and cheerful obedience of a friend and of a freedman. There is a felt security which you had not before; for now you know that the all-powerful Mediator is upon your side. There is a strength which you had not before; for now there is a spirit given to help your infirmities, on which you cannot too certainly depend, and which you cannot too confidently pray for. There is a love which you had not before; for now faith has opened a fountain of gratitude in the heart; and you, believing the love that God has to you, love Him back again. There is an alacrity and a goodwill that you had not before; for now God makes you willing in the day of His power—working in you to will as well as to do of His good pleasure. There is a delight, a spontaneous and Heaven-born delight in the service of God which you had not before; for now He puts the law into your inward part, or, in other words, He enlists your affections and your taste on the side of obedience—so that what before was a weariness or a drudgery or a galling bondage, becomes your meat and drink, a congenial and much-loved employment. You serve God because you love Him. You do His will because you delight to do Him honour.

SERMON VI.

THE IMMEDIATE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE.

"In keeping of them there is great reward."—PSALM xix. 11.

You will observe the Psalmist does not say in these words, that *after* the keeping of the commandments there is great reward—but that *in* the keeping of them, there is great reward; and the lesson which we mean to urge from this is, that, altogether beside any future recompense which may be annexed to obedience, there is in the very work of obedience a present recreation. The reward spoken of in the text, is the pleasure which lies in the service of God now; and not in the payment which is judicially made for it afterwards. It is the instantaneous delight which springs up in the heart, at the moment of well-doing; and not any subsequent delight which may have been affixed to it, under the existing economy of nature or Providence. And whether this be sustained as the meaning or not in the verse that is before us—it is at least a meaning which fully accords both with experience and the doctrine of scripture. "O how love I thy law" marks a present gratification in the keeping of it; and so does the passage, that "I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." The hundred and nineteenth Psalm is full of such testimonies; and so indeed in the one from which our text is taken,

there is most distinct affirmation, not of a future reward from our observation of God's will, but of an immediate joy. The statutes of the Lord are spoken of not merely as right, but as rejoicing the heart, as more to be desired than gold yea than much fine gold, and sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb—all marking a sweetness and a satisfaction in the work of virtue itself, apart from any coming good that may accrue from the performance of it—a current, and not a consequent gratification, wherewith the spirit is regaled in the very midst of the deeds and desires of righteousness; just as the eye is regaled on the instant by sights of beauty, or the ear by that melody which falls upon it.

In the prosecution of this discourse we shall first endeavour, shortly to state what the ingredients are of the present reward, which there is in the keeping of the commandments: And secondly, to state the nature of that future reward which cometh after the keeping of the commandments; and of what importance it is to the real worth and character of our obedience, that we should have right apprehensions of this. We shall then, in a very few words of practical application, advert to the way in which the economy of the gospel bears upon this whole question.

This immediate joy which there is in the keeping of God's law, might be resolved we think, into two leading ingredients. The first is the happiness that flows direct, from the sense of doing or having done what is right. It proceeds from the testimony of an approving conscience. It lies in the satisfaction wherewith the ear of the inner man listens

to the inward voice, when it speaks in the accents of complacency. This was ground of rejoicing to the mind of an apostle. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience." It is not a rejoicing that springs altogether from the hope of reward; or because, on the recollection of a past integrity or a past charity or a past self-denial, there is founded the anticipation of a future blessedness. There is a blessing in the recollection itself. It is precious on its own account. It drops as it were an immediate elixir upon the soul. A good conscience is a present as well as a perpetual feast; and there is a felt and present solace, in the taste and flavour of that hidden manna which it administers. It affords something more than a clear medium, through which we might see a coming reward on the distance that lies before us. In the very clearness itself, there is the enjoyment even now, of sweetest sunshine; and the pleasure of a good conscience no more consists alone in the hope of a future remuneration, than the pain of a bad or an accusing conscience consists alone in the dread of a future vengeance. There is in remorse a present agony, that is distinct from fear. There is in the answer of a good conscience a present satisfaction, that is distinct from hope; and this forms one ingredient of that reward, which lies even now, in the keeping of the commandments.

But there is still another ingredient. Though the acts of the hand be the outward expressions of virtue, yet they are the affections of the heart which constitute its real and primary essence. Insomuch that the love of God is said to be the first

and greatest of the commandments; and all those commandments that have for their object the good of our fellow-men, are said by the apostle to be briefly comprehended in this saying—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Now in the play and exercise of love, there is instantaneous joy. Love is not merely acted on as a principle—it is felt as an emotion; and, save when it strays from duty or is checked by disappointment, it is a pleasurable emotion. More especially is it so, and that in greatest pureness and ecstasy, when it goes forth in rejoicing confidence towards God—when the heart of the creature rises to the Creator, in trust and in tenderness—when it can look to the Being who made it as a Friend; and throw back the willing regards of gratitude upon Him, for those kind and fatherly regards that He ever casts on His acceptable worshippers—when from gratitude it rises to esteem, and eyes with delighted admiration the gracefulness and the glory which sit on His revealed countenance—when on the aspect of the Divinity, seen without disturbance and without dread, are beheld both the mildness and the majesty of worth —and above all when He stands forth in the charms of His unspotted holiness; and at once transports and solemnizes the soul of him, whom, whether by the eye of Faith or the eye of vision, He admits to see the moral radiance that encircles His throne. There is in all this a beatitude of which no adequate utterance can be given. It is, in truth, the very beatitude of Heaven above; and may be realised, though in fainter degree and at broken intervals, upon earth below. There be a saintly and a select

few, who, at times, even on this side of the grave, have attained to such mysterious elevation; and who also, after they have descended from the heights of a more ethereal sacredness, feel, in the perennial sense of God's reconciled presence, a gladness which is also perennial. If there be not at all times a seraphic ecstasy, there is at most times a seraphic calmness in their spirits. They have a peace which the world knoweth not; and are not troubled as other men, in their midway passage between them and Eternity. There is at least a foretaste of the coming joy; and if love to God be indeed shed abroad in their hearts, it is even now the experience of their hearts, that, in the keeping of the first and greatest commandment, there is indeed a very great reward.

But we shall speak more to the intelligence of the general world, if we exemplify the truth of the text, by the second great affection that is required of us in the gospel, even the love of our neighbour. In the keeping of this commandment too, there is a great reward. We do not insist on the constitutional delight which many have in the mere activities of benevolence, or on the gratification that is thereby afforded even to our taste for employment; or on that enjoyment which is felt by every philanthropist, when made hopeful or happy by the success which has attended his prosperous management of human nature. This last is rather a reward that cometh after our plans and performances of well-doing, than one which intermixes with the prosecution of them. But what is more to the truth of our principle, is the pleasure which is lighted up in the heart

on the first instant of its felt kindness towards any creature that breathes—that no sooner does the play of cordiality begin there, than there commences along with it a play of purest and most satisfying enjoyment —that there is delight in the original conceptions of Benevolence, and delight also in all its out-goings —that whereas malignity and envy and anger do rankle the bosom, gratitude and goodwill and all the benign affections of our nature do rejoice it, being fraught with a double blessing, and demonstrating the lesson of our text by that ample share of it, which cometh to the giver, and which consists in the happiness that redounds to himself from the wish and the effort to make others happy. When the heart is thus attuned, it is then that it tastes of the very truth and substance of enjoyment— it is then that the mechanism of our sentient nature moves sweetly; and that, in the mere concord of its feelings and faculties, there is unutterable joy. It is then that the soul is in its wholesome and well-conditioned frame; and indeed, from the very beaming that plays on the human countenance, we may gather how when there is kindness within there is comfort within. The inner man feels, that when breathing in the element of love, he is breathing in an element of light and cheerfulness; and that the happiest mood of the spirit, is when it blandly and bounteously devises for another's welfare. The selfishness by which it of old was actuated, is now felt to have been a weight and a confinement upon its energies—from which when released, it seems as if it had just gotten its native elasticity; and so could forthwith expatiate on a

field, where there was room and liberty and a genial atmosphere. It is almost as if a stricture upon its faculties had been taken off—and it was now restored to alacrity, because its own proper force and freedom had been restored to it. Certain it is, that, both in the feelings and the outflowings of human sympathy, there is a satisfaction which not only blesses our companionships on earth, but which we shall bear with us to the choirs of Paradise; and that, beside the goodwill which radiates from Heaven's throne and is reflected back again to Him who sitteth thereon, there is a goodwill which passes and repasses in busy circulation among all the members of Heaven's family. Now of this we have a present foretaste, of which even the most unsaintly and unregenerate of this world can be made to understand. For God, hath not only, to bind together a perpetual society in Heaven, established there the charity that never faileth—but, even for the temporary purposes of our frail and fleeting society on earth, hath spread the many thousand charities of home and of neighbourhood even among the men of our ungodly generation. And even to them we can confidently appeal for the truth, that, in the grovelling pursuits whether of sense or avarice, they never experienced so true a delight, as in those moments when their spirit was touched into sympathy with other spirits than their own. There is many a scene of domestic tenderness on which this principle is fully manifested; and whence we may gather what that is, in which, after all, the real happiness of our nature lies. It is most certainly more in the play of kindness to others, than in

the secreting or securing of any animal enjoyment to ourselves. In the walks of merchandise men are to be found, who, among the noblest specimens of all that virtue which mere nature has to boast of, can, upon their own remembrance of their own feelings, give the same testimony—who perhaps recollect a time, when, on the sad occasion of a neighbour's bankruptcy, the principle on which we now insist was brought to the trial of their own observation—who as they sat in judgment over the fortunes of a fallen family, were visited with the kindlings of a mercy that rejoiced against judgment and prevailed above it—who could have exacted all, but, in a moment of relenting generosity, there was a gentle force upon their spirits which would not let them; and, in virtue of which, they felt and they forgave.—We ask, if, in the tenderness and in the triumph of that moment, there was not ample compensation made for all which they surrendered; or if all the money which they made over with their hands, could have purchased one fraction of the delight that they had from the mercy which then glowed in their bosoms?

But we can no longer afford to multiply these illustrations; and we trust that it will now appear abundantly manifest, how, in the exercise of love to our fellows there is a moral, even as, in the exercise of Love to our God, there is a spiritual gladness; and how likely it is therefore, that when the one is blended with the other, or rather when the one either originates or issues from the other, there is in the keeping of the second, as well as of the first law, a very precious and withal a present reward.

There is not a single virtue, when looked to in its own independent aspect, of which the same thing might not be affirmed. They one and all of them yield an immediate satisfaction to the wearer. There is a certain untroubled serenity in truth and in justice—there is a felt and native dignity in honour—in perfect keeping with this, there is a quiet and secure resting-place to the inner man in gentleness and humility—there is, we shall not say a proud, but at least a triumphant complacency in all the virtues of self-command—there is a cheerfulness to the spirit in the temperance of the body—there is in purity such a peace as well as transparent beauty and loveliness, that it is like breathing in the third Heavens instead of this world's gross and troubled atmosphere, when, under the guardianship of strictest delicacy, the heart becomes that hallowed abode, in which no wrong or tainted imagination is permitted to dwell. These and all the other moralities of the human character, are what make up the true health and harmony of the soul. They are the very streams or materials of that well, which is struck out in the bosom of regenerated man, and which springeth up there unto life everlasting. They are those fruits of the spirit which are sweet unto the taste, and which constitute the food and the sustenance of eternity. The crown that is given in paradise to the possessor of these, is neither of gold nor of silver; for these in truth are the very graces, of which the crown and all its glory is composed. It is a moral splendour that is lighted up there. It is virtue which blooms and is immortal there. It is the felt pleasure that they have in

goodness here, though with a sad mixture and mitigation of earthliness—this is the very feeling which is transported along with the spirits of the good to Heaven, and constitutes the very essence of Heaven's blessedness. Nevertheless, and amid all the obscurations of our earthly nature, we have the feeling even on this side of death; and, such as it is, it forms that present reward which there is in the keeping of the commandments.

II. Now, instead of the reward which there is *in* the keeping of the commandments, let us conceive that there had been a reward *after* the keeping of the commandments, and not only so, but that it is quite distinct from that enjoyment of which we have now spoken and which lies directly and essentially in the obedience itself. Instead of a happiness that resides natively, or that comes forth immediately, out of the holiness—let it be thought of for a moment, as a happiness that has been arbitrarily and by divine appointment annexed to holiness. This can easily be imagined—a Heaven in which there may be the delight that belongs to virtue, but which is also peopled with other charms—where there are sights of loveliness, and sounds of sweetest harmony—where beside the recreation that there is to the glorified spirit, there is also a recreation to the glorified senses; and the pleasures even of taste and intellect are superadded, to the ecstasies of a saintly and seraphic devotion—a Heaven of space and splendour and full security from ought that can pain or can annoy; and whose very exemption from the sufferings of a

hideous and everlasting hell, is enough to call out the desires of all men towards it. Now we can well suppose, that the one ingredient of its sacredness may be lost sight of, in the multitude of those other ingredients which compose the felicity of such a Paradise as this—or, at all events, that it is not the sacredness but something else, which gives the practical urgency to our efforts and desires after such a habitation. And so, if it still is obedience by which we earn Heaven, while its blessedness is fancied to consist of things which are distinct from the gratification that lies in the obedience itself—then virtue becomes the work, and a something which is not virtue forms the wages. The candidates of immortality are so many labourers for hire; and Heaven is not looked to, or at least not aspired after, as a place of holiness—but as the price that is given for it.

Now this is a consideration which you do well to ponder, for it really does affect the whole spirit and character of your Christianity. It goes to the very root of the principle by which you are actuated—and will perhaps lay bare to the eye of conscience, how utterly devoid you are of that which may be deemed the very essence of religion. It is no evidence at all of the love which you have for a work, that you have a love to its wages. Let two men go forth, upon the labour that is prescribed to them by their divine lawgiver; and it makes all the difference in the world between the one man and the other—if I shall see the first busied with the labour because of his liking it, and the second because of his looking to the remuneration that

comes afterwards. A taste for the employment, is a wholly different thing from a taste for its distinct and subsequent reward. They may lie as wide of each other, as do the two elements of sordidness and sacredness; and those services, which, had they proceeded from willingness and taste, would have argued a holy creature, may in fact be nothing better than the services of a drivelling and reluctant mercenary.

We might appeal on this subject to the understanding of an ordinary workman. He knows well the distinction, between a love of the work, and a love of the payment which is made for it; and it is very possible that he has none whatever for the one, while all the regards of his heart are set upon the other. He would rather have the payment without the work, to which at the same time he submits, only because he must, as to any hard and hateful necessity. He would feel it a strange proposal, should work be offered to him, and, on inquiring about the reward, should be told, that it was just more work; and that the better he did his allotted service, so much the larger would be the supply and imposition of that same service in all time coming. Were this all the encouragement a master had to give, he would soon desert the employment; or if compelled thereto, would at least feel the revolt of all his inclinations to be against it. And what we have to ask is, whether, with all the compliances of your outer man, there be not the very same revolt of your inner man from the service of God—whether, as in ordinary labour the wages are given as a compensation for the weariness, so

with you a deliverance from hell and an entrance upon some vague and fancied heaven, be not counted upon as the after-wages of a labour which at present and in itself you feel to be a weariness —whether the service of religion be indeed your taste, or only your task, at which now you slavishly and assiduously ply, not for its own sake, but for the sake of a something else that lies in the distance before you—whether the exercises of your practical Christianity be exercises unto godliness, or in the hope to make a gain of godliness—whether it be a thing of delight or a thing of drudgery, extorted by a fear from without or excited by a feeling from within—a generous homage to the glory of the supreme lawgiver and the worth of His commandments, or but the worthless policy of a creeping and ignoble selfishness?

These are questions which go to the very soul of your religion; and by which we are now attempting to probe and to scrutinize among those hidden things of the heart, that shall at length be brought out and fully manifested in the day of reckoning. They are the questions by which the sterling and the counterfeit in Christianity may be determined. The true religiousness of a man does not hinge upon what the things be to which he is driven, but upon what the things be in which he natively and spontaneously delights. An inferior animal can be operated upon by pain and terror as well as he. It can tremble under the rod of authority, when backed with the power of enforcement, as well as he. Or it can be lured by the gratifications that are suited to its nature, as well as he. These are mo-

tives, that can be addressed with effect, to the mere element of earthliness; and, under their influence, many are the formalities of religion which might be gone through, and many are its severe and servile exactions which might be rendered, and much of its seemly exterior might be put on—as much certainly as might sustain the appearance of a goodly profession. But still the question is in reserve, if you delight in the law of God after the inward man—if the homage you give be that of willing and affectionate loyalty—if the walk you tread upon be that of a disinterested rectitude—if you have been lured into holiness by the beauty of its graces, and not by the bribery of its gains—For surely there is nought in him of the pure or the exalted or the heavenly, who labours only for the reward that cometh after the commandment, and neither feels nor understands how in the commandment there should be a great reward.

III. We may now perhaps be able to perceive, how the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in and adapts itself to the question that is now before you. It, in the first instance then, releases you altogether from the law as a covenant. It tells you that you are not to work for Heaven, because that Heaven is secured to you in another way. Instead of coming forth with the stipulation of do this and live, it comes forth with the offer of eternal life to you as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. One reason of this is, that God's jurisprudence requires a higher homage to be rendered to it, than can possibly be rendered by the obedience of man; and

therefore it will not consent so far to honour that obedience, as to bestow upon it the rewards of eternity, on the footing of these being a due and a rightful acknowledgment. The law of God refuses to let itself down in this way to the degraded standard of human virtue; and, therefore, instead of holding out eternal life to us as the payment of our righteousness, it holds it out to us for the sake of the righteousness of Christ—if we will consent to receive it on this footing. It is thus that the dignity of Heaven's government is secured; and the character of God as a Sovereign is not at all compromised, by the terms of acceptance which He holds out to the guilty who have offended Him.

But this gospel economy is not more for the character of God as a Sovereign, than it is for the character of man as the subject of God's will. The truth is that if you waken up the old economy of do this and live, you waken up that very spirit of bondage and of low mercenary bargaining between the two parties, which we have already endeavoured to stigmatize. Along with the fears of legality, the sordidness of legality is sure to make entrance again into the heart; and we do not see how under such a dispensation, the pursuit of holiness can be disencumbered from the mixture of such ignoble motives, as would make the pursuit a selfish and an unholy one. There is no access, in such very peculiar circumstances as these—there is no access to a sinner's heart for the love of holiness in itself, but by making him the free offer of Heaven as an unconditional gift; and at the same time making him understand, that it is in truth holiness and nothing

else, which forms the very essence of Heaven's blessedness. On this footing let there be a will come on the part of men, and there is a welcome on the part of God. There is no let or hindrance whatever between the sinner and the mercy-seat. You have not to work for acceptance, but the signal of acceptance is even now held out to you; and, instead of winning the favour of God by your holiness, this favour smiles upon you now, and, if you will only put yourself in its way, it will, as its first and very greatest expression, put the principle of holiness within you. O! then be persuaded to close with this free and transforming gospel. "Turn unto me now," says God, "and I will pour out my Spirit upon you." That law, which you are now so afraid of, you will be made to love; and from a service of jealousy and constraint, it will become a service of willingness. Of that splendid Heaven whereof you have the promise, you will have a present and a most precious sample, in the new tastes and new enjoyments of the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord. This will be in fact the beginning of Heaven to your souls—the morning twilight of your happy and good eternity. In the moral gladness of your renovated nature, you will have the earnest of what is coming; and, on your way through the world, will demonstrate how great the difference is between the low crouching and fearful spirit of the legal, and the liberal and generous style of the evangelical obedience.

SERMON VII.

THE NECESSITY OF A PERSONAL MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN.

" Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;"—COLOSSIANS i. 12.

To any man who reads a few of these verses in connection, it must be obvious that the apostle points to something more than a judicial meetness for the kingdom of Heaven—though without that redemption which is through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sin, we could never have been admitted into heaven. But to walk worthy of the Lord, and to be fruitful in every good work, and to be strengthened with all might—these also are so many ingredients of the meetness. There is a personal, as well as a judicial meetness, indispensable to our becoming partakers of the inheritance of the saints; and while there is nothing more true, than that it is by faith alone that we are justified—it is just as true, that, ere we can obtain as the fruit of our justification a place in the blessed family above, we must be sanctified by faith.

We often, in the matters of the divine administration, separate, in idea, the judicial from the personal meetness for heaven; and we lay an inferior stress upon the latter, while we count the former to be

indispensable. What helps us to do this, is the arbitrary connection which obtains between a punishment and a crime in civil society. A violent temper, for example, is its own punishment; and the misery which it inflicts by its own working, may be regarded as the natural and necessary effect of the temper itself. But it may further urge the man who is under its power to the transgression of an assault upon his neighbour, for which by the law of his country he is put into confinement. By being thus detached from society, he is certainly restrained for the time from a similar act of violence against another; and even when sent back from his imprisonment, the fear of its recurrence may restrain him, from giving vent in extravagant conduct at least, to the outrageous feelings which swell and tumultuate in his bosom. The object of peace and protection to the community is gained by this proceeding. But there is nothing done by it, to mollify the man's temper. There may be something done to repress the outbreakings of mischief, but nothing done to purify or to dry up the source. The man may still continue to fester, and to be agitated, and to sustain all the miseries of a fierce internal war. So that even though the civil punishment were remitted; though by the payment of a ransom on the part of another, we obtained a full discharge from the penalties of the law—there are other penalties annexed by nature to the moral infirmities of his character, from which the law can obtain for him no deliverance whatever. It may take off the sufferings which itself put on; but from the sufferings which essentially attach to the constitution of

his heart, it cannot save him. It cannot save him from the misery of his own boisterous and ungovernable temper. It cannot save him from the wretchedness of being driven, and pursued, and agonised, by the fury and the disorder of his own passions. After it has done its uttermost, in the way of relieving him from the burden of every legal chastisement—after it has reversed its sentence, and made it pass into a sentence of justification—after it has pronounced upon him in such a way, that, forensically and in the eye of the law, he is a righteous person—after it has snatched him from the hand of its own executioners—There may be the vengeance of an executioner within, who never ceases from the cruelty of his applications. The factitious distress which the law lays on, the law also can lift off. But there is a natural and necessary distress, appended by a law of our moral constitution to the character, and which will remain so long as the character remains. And in the heat and violence of an anger, which restraint may confine, but which restraint can never extinguish—in the conflict and fermentation of passions, which live and burn and fluctuate within the brooding chambers of his own heart—in the affronted pride, and the unquelled resentment, which are at all times ready to burst forth on the fancied provocation of his fellow-men—May this unhappy criminal, assoilzied and justified and set free from all the arbitrary impositions of law, still feel the burden of a curse from which there is no escaping—and of a punishment, that, in the language of Cain, is heavier than he can bear.

There is we have every reason to believe, both

an arbitrary and a natural ingredient in the punishment of hell. We are apt to look only to the former, and to overlook the latter. There is no natural connection between moral guilt and the application of intense heat to the material part of our constitution. But still it is the heat, the flame, the fire and brimstone, the everlasting burnings—which chiefly appal the fancy, and engross the fears of the inner man, when he thinks of the place of condemnation. Now it is very true, that, by a bare act of justification, we may be delivered from all that is gross and corporeal in these torments. The fire may cease to burn, and the body may cease to be agonised. But if the character remain, the misery it entails on the moral constitution will also remain. A mere deed of acquittal will never work out a deliverance from this misery. There is no new arrangement made known to us in the gospel, by which God has dissolved the alliance between love and enjoyment on the one hand, or between hatred and wretchedness on the other. He has made no change, either on the character or on the tendency of what is right and wrong. Virtue is as inseparable from happiness as before; and vice as inseparable from misery as before. The economy of grace, made known to us in the New Testament, has no more broken up the connection between benevolence and pleasure, or between malignity and pain in a man's heart—than it has broken up the connection between the sight of beauty and an emotion of pleasure, or between the sight of deformity and an emotion of disgust. So that, if, by a solitary deed of justification, a

believer could be delivered from the fire of hell, and at the same time were to remain in character and affection just what he was—a portion of the feeling of hell would still adhere to him. His body may be at ease from all that is painful, in respect of physical sensation; but his mind, in respect of all that is painful in moral sensation, may be the seat of a torment as unrelenting as ever. All that is mainly and essentially hell may still be attached to his person, without respite and without mitigation. Let pride come into collision with contempt; and disdain meet with equal disdain; and hatred exchange its mutual glances, from one unregenerated being to another; and remorse shoot its arrows, across this dark scene of moral turbulence and disorder; and suspicion and envy and discontent rankle in the hearts of creatures, fired with hostility towards God and against each other —these, though not one sensation of agony were permitted to reach their bodies, are enough to make a hell, out of any habitation of assembled criminals. These form the sharpest inflictions of the worm that dieth not, and the fiercest materials of the fire that is not quenched. The man who has these unsanctified feelings in his heart, carries the elements of hell about with him. He has only to die, and to descend with his unrenewed passions into that place, where all who have not been born again have gone before him. It is then that he enters into hell. In respect of the material ingredients of the torture, it is certainly conceivable that he may be saved by being justified. But in respect of the moral ingredients of the torture, the

passions themselves must be extricated from his bosom, and to be saved he must be sanctified.

So it is not enough, you will perceive, to obtain a man's translation from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven, in order to translate him from the misery of the one abode to the happiness of the other. A great part of the misery of the former, consists in the sufferings, which, by the unrepealed law of moral and sentient nature, are attached to vicious and unholy propensities. And a great part of the happiness of the latter, consists in the enjoyments, which, by the same law are attached to kind and good and holy affections. So that to have the full advantage of an inheritance among the saints, there must be a meetness of character; and for this purpose, to have the sinner turned into a saint, is just as essential as to have a deed of acquittal made out—or a sentence of justification passed upon him.

Let us first direct your attention for a little longer to the first of those receptacles; and, however painful the imagery associated with such a contemplation may be, the importance of the lesson must be held as our apology. We are not to overlook the penal character of those sufferings, which are endured in the prison-house of the damned; and we have every reason to believe, that intense bodily pain forms one ingredient of this bitter and ever-during agony. But there are other ingredients; and, to prove how these of themselves are enough to bring a heavy load of wretchedness on the accursed, we ask you to think of the horrors of an unregulated jail—where bodily

pain may be conceived to have no place—where, if you choose, there is no disease, and the wretched inmates are restrained by the terrors of the discipline from acts of violence on each other. Let corporeal suffering be detached from this abode of criminals, as an element of wretchedness altogether. Still there are other elements, which, working in their hearts with unchastened violence, may beget such a mental wretchedness—as to make it the most expressive way of characterising this scene of confinement, to call it a hell upon earth. There may be mutual rage and mutual revilings. There may be the misery of revenge unsatiated, or of revenge venting itself in keenest execrations. There may be the uproar of bacchanalian levity, mingled with all that is blasphemous in language, and all that is fierce or unhallowed in desire. There may be passion, whether sordid or malicious, raising a tempest in the soul before its gratification; or leaving after it the bitterness of remorse. There may be the unbridled selfishness of beings —each clamouring for his own object, and only uniting in one cry of daring and desperate rebellion against heaven's law. You have only to stamp immortality on these creatures, in order to have a hell; and though you were to open the prison door and loose them from confinement, each would carry away with him his own portion of hell. You may travel them from one end of the world to the other—yet would not these accursed beings, thereby escape the sufferings of what is mainly and essentially hell. You may even transport their persons into what is locally heaven; and yet, re-

coiling as they would from what that is which forms the enjoyment of its indwellers, they would still continue to be haunted by the substantial wretchedness of hell. These are miseries from which no change of place, and no sentence of justification, can deliver them. These are ills from which they cannot be saved, by a mere act of transference from one abode to another. There must be an act of transformation from one character to another; or, in other words, if faith be to save them from these, they must be sanctified by faith.

But, without going for illustration to the outcasts of exile and imprisonment, the very same thing may be exemplified in the bosom of families. It is not necessary that pain be inflicted on bodies by actions of violence, in order to make up a wretched family. It is enough that pain be made to rankle within every heart, by means of the affections of violence. Out of the elements of malignity, and suspicion, and hatred, and unfaithfulness, and disgust—an abode of enjoyment may be turned into an abode of intensest suffering. A house upon earth, from the mere operation of moral causes, may be turned into hell. The fiercest ingredients of the place of torment, may brood and break out in the dwelling-places of the unregenerate in the world. So that though the material element of fire were altogether expunged from the future arrangements of nature and of providence—yet God has other elements, which he can wield to the eternal wretchedness of those who disobey him. There are other agonies which share the work of vengeance in that lake, that is

represented as burning with fire and brimstone. Our own passions will be to Him the ministers of hottest indignation; and to be saved from these, it is not enough that we be justified in our persons—there must be a meetness impressed on our characters, and to be saved we must be sanctified.

It is true, at the same time, of many a worldly man—that he may be comparatively a stranger to the fiercer malignities of our nature; and that he may not therefore carry to the place of his destination the torture which these are calculated to inflict upon him. But it is at least true of every man, who is not born of the Spirit of God—that he loves the creature more than the Creator. Let him carry this unsanctified affection with him to his grave. Let the desires of flesh and blood remain unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, at that period when death lays him prostrate like a fallen tree upon the ground. Let it be true, that as the tree falleth so it lies; and that when he rises again, he rises with this idolatrous affection in the full vigour of carnal and unsubdued nature. On the great day of manifestation, let the utter worthlessness of such a propensity, be laid open to his now awakened conscience; and let the shame and everlasting contempt of a preference so sordid, follow him to his assigned habitation. Let him be made to see that there adheres to his character, the guilt of having cast his God away from him; and the folly of having forsaken the fountain of unperishable good, and chosen for his eternity the wretched employment of feeding upon ashes. Let the eye of infinite rectitude be felt to be turned

upon him as an eye of rebuke; and let him know himself to be a worthless outcast from the great family of holiness. These are sufficient of themselves to make out the sting of an undying worm, whether a weight of corporeal agony be added or not to the weight of these agonising reflections. In these there is enough of the elements of disquietude to give to hell an unsupportable bitterness; and to be saved from these, it will not suffice that his name be expunged from the book of condemnation. It will not suffice that a sentence of justification be attached to his name. A real process of crucifying him unto the world, and making him alive unto God, must be attached to his person. Or, in other words—in virtue of an eternal ordination by which misery of feeling is ever attached to worthlessness of character, there is a misery attached to every depraved creature, to be saved from which, his depravity must be done away, and he must be sanctified.

This might be rendered still more evident by our directing your attention in the second place, to heaven and to the essential character of that blessedness which is found in it. But enough that we distinguish between that part of the punishment of hell which is arbitrarily attached to sin, and that part of it which is necessarily and naturally attached to sin. It may be seen from this how little a mere unaccompanied deed of justification can do for us—if it only deliver us from the material fire of the place of condemnation. It will be seen, that, even were the fire extinguished, there would, in every unregenerate bosom, be moral elements at work, to constitute an

undying worm, which would never cease to torment us by its corrosions—that, to be delivered from the torture and the fury of these elements, the elements themselves must be extinguished; or, in other words, we must be delivered from all the passions and all the propensities of ungodliness. We must be delivered from the whole train of dark and malignant and worldly affections, which the apostle denominates the works of the flesh. We must be delivered from all that is opposite either to the first or to the second commandment of the law. God in fact must make that new covenant with us, by which He gives us clean hearts, and creates within us right spirits. In other words it is not enough that there be a forensic deed of justification. There must be a personal transformation of character; and faith cannot save us from that which forms the mighty burden of a sinner's curse—but through the sinner being sanctified by faith.

SERMON VIII.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SINGLENESS OF AIM AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT.

"The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light"—MATTHEW vi. 22.

THERE is a great demand among certain religionists, for clear and simple views of the gospel. And, to make this good, they often fasten upon some one truth or object in the field of revelation, to which they look singly and exclusively; and as if it alone were representative of all Christianity, or comprehensive of all. They seem to have confounded singleness of eye, with the singleness of the object which the eye fastens upon; and to have understood our Saviour as if He meant to describe the state of the object, when He was describing the state of the organ. Now it is with the mental as it is with the corporeal eye. In a pure and right state of the latter, it is not one thing only which is seen, but all the things which are on the field of vision—the trees, and the houses, and the various objects, which make up a complex and extended landscape. It would mark a disease, and not a perfection, in this organ—were its power of beholding restricted to one thing only. And the same is true of the spiritual landscape—of the Bible that tablet of revelation, on which are spread out the doctrines and the informations of a

voluminous record. It would argue no perfection in the seeing faculty of the mind, were it awake only to one of these doctrines while blind or undiscerning to all the rest. Did its singleness consist in the oneness of the thing which it saw, so that all the other things both new and old of scripture were unheeded or unobserved by it—this surely were an impotency or a defect, instead of an excellency in the mental eye. Instead of the whole body being full of light, there would be a partial and distorted view of Christian truth; and for the largeness and variety of heaven's own communication, we should be wholly taken up with some shibboleth of a party, some solitary principle or point of narrow sectarianism.

We may be sure then that the singleness of eye, in our text, is something different from any straitening of this sort; and by which, in fact, illumination were obstructed, rather than let forth in all its fulness and expanse upon the understanding. This singleness of eye refers not to the number of truths which might be presented to the contemplation of the intellect; nor does it signify that we should but entertain one truth, or one topic, in opposition to a multiplicity. It refers to the number of pursuits in which, for various objects of desire or affection, we might be practically engaged; and it signifies that we should give ourselves to one such pursuit to the exclusion of every other, or at least to the entire subordination of every other. It is called singleness of eye, not because the eye sees but one thing; but, more properly, because it looks in one direction—having one great object after

which the mind predominantly aims; and to which therefore it looks steadfastly, and constantly, and so singly. Singleness of eye in this place, denotes, not the simplicity of our intellectual regards as bestowed on some one object of theoretical contemplation, but the simplicity of our moral regards towards some one object of practical attainment. It marks the unity, and along with it, the energy of a ruling passion—for which every other passion is pressed into subserviency, or gives way altogether. It follows not because the mind hath fixed and concentred all its faculties on some one acquisition, that it must all the while confine its regards to but one truth in science or one article in theology. The navigator may have set his heart on the realizing of a discovery in some remote quarter of the globe; and with this, as his supreme or rather single ambition, he may repel every lateral temptation that would divert him on his way; and suffer neither the beauty and luxury of one region to detain him, nor the gainful merchandise of another to draw him from his course. There is here singleness of eye—yet of an eye filled and exercised with many objects of contemplation notwithstanding; and busied in the work of perpetual observation, both on the depths of the earth beneath and on the courses of the firmament above, on the compass by which he steers, on the chart by which he measures and ascertains his progress. The voyage may be said to have but one object—yet, for its proper guidance and equipment, there might be a manifold attention required, and light not from one but from many sciences. And so of the voyage to eternity, and

the steadfast or singlehearted prosecution of it. The object is one; and he who is resolved upon its attainment, may evince both the strength and the simplicity of his purpose, by his universal resistance to the various solicitations, that would draw him by a thousand devious ways from the path to heaven. Yet we are not to suppose, that, because the object is one, it is but the light of one truth or one proposition which leads the way to it. To the expediting of this journey, there is use for the whole fulness and furniture of the Bible. And as its objects are various, so the mind is variously exercised—at one time with the doctrine of the sacrifice, whence it obtaineth peace—at another with the doctrine of the Spirit, whence it obtaineth strength—at a third with the doctrine of the law as a rule of life to believers, whence it obtaineth direction. In short, instead of but one truth singled out perhaps by some hair-splitting or metaphysic nicety, the manifold lights of scripture and experience conspire to shine upon his way. His eye is single, not because it looks to but one point in theology—but because intent upon the one object of a blissful immortality, or upon the one path which leads to it.

Now though, beside the single pursuit of religion, there may be specified a thousand other pursuits distinct from it and opposed to it—as the pursuit of fame, the pursuit of fortune, the pursuit of ambition, the pursuit of pleasure—yet, in the Bible, all these are generally classed together and comprehended, under the one characteristic of enmity to God and a life of godliness, of rivalship

with the interests of eternity. It is thus that the children of light and the children of this world are contrasted with each other—the meat that perisheth, with the meat that endureth—the temptations of the present evil world, with the powers of the world to come—the broad way of destruction, with the narrow path of life everlasting—the slavery of Satan, with the service of the living and true God. Man is looked upon as being under the rivalry of two great forces, of but two great conflicting elements. Our text, where singleness of eye is recommended, lies between one passage in which we are told to lay not up for ourselves treasures on earth but treasures in heaven, and another passage in which we are told that no man can serve two masters and that he cannot serve God and mammon. This singleness stands opposed in scripture, not to multiplicity, but to doubleness. It is true that there are manifold earthly affections, any one of which might prevail to the destruction of our hopes and interests in eternity; yet they may all be regarded, in their one generic character of earthliness. "Love not the world," says the apostle John, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." It is by wavering between these two, between the will of God on the one hand, and some worldly affection whatever that may be upon the other—that we neglect the injunc-

tion of the text, like the double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways. It is because the eye most looks to what the heart most likes, that singleness of eye is made to denote the singleness of a heart, set upon heaven and its treasures. It is because the regards of the mind are solely fixed upon that which is solely aimed after, that, by the same term, we may express that full purpose of heart, wherewith we cleave to the one master, and utterly refuse the bribes or service of the other. It is because when bent on some great pursuit, we turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, but persevere in our onward course, unseduced by any object that would lure us into by-ways—that by the singleness of eye in our text, we understand the habit of him, who, actuated by the one perpetual will to be what he ought and do what he ought, resists the every solicitation that might tempt him away from this great and unchanging principle. Singleness of eye is held equivalent to singleness of heart or of purpose—because when the regards of the heart are solely directed to the one thing needful, then the regards of the understanding are solely directed to its contemplation, and to the means of securing it. And what we have now to evince is, how, such being the moral state of the purposes and affections, the intellectual state of the whole body being full of light follows from it—just as an effect does from its cause, or a consequent from the antecedent that went before it. We should like, if possible, to manifest the connection between the one and the other; and to show by what transition it is, that the man whose whole determination

and desire is to make good his eternity in heaven, and who, in pursuit of this, is ready to shun or to sacrifice every object of desire that would enter into competition with it—how he comes, and in virtue of this very attitude, to move forward in an element of clearness, and to be free from the doubts and the uncertainties which harass the spirits and hinder the progress of other men.

I. Now the first reason for this is very obvious, and in harmony with all experience. That which we most desire to have, we most desire to know about; or, at least, to know the means of obtaining it. It is not in nature, that we should vehemently wish to possess an object, and yet be at no pains to inquire the way to it. Let a man be actuated by a strong and unceasing desire after salvation; and he will never cease to search after the way of salvation, even till he has found it. He will hearken diligently, and, as the fruit of this, his soul will at length be satisfied. The desire of his heart will set to work the faculties of his mind; and, just as in all other busy scholarship, the learning is in proportion to the labour—so will he find it the way to light and learning in the scholarship of Christianity. The more sharply set we are upon any attainment, the more surely will we give all our wits to the investigation of the process by which it may be reached; and just as the skill and intelligence are all the greater in a favourite service, than in one to which we are indifferent—so the more favourite any object of ambition is, the more exercised and awake will our attention be to all the

methods by which it may be realized. Just conceive this object to be the friendship of God. Let it be the unquenchable desire of the creature, going forth in quest of the Creator. Let it be such a thirst after the living God, as to make it the supreme and most urgent appetite of his nature—Then, under its impulse, he, in the strong language of scripture, will stir himself up that he may lay hold of his Maker; he will search after Him as for hidden treasure; he will seek for Him if haply he may find Him. He will eagerly pursue after every trace and indication of the Godhead. He will seek for Him in the Bible. He will seek for Him in meditation. He will seek for Him in prayer. He will grope as it were in every direction for the way of access; nor will he take rest to his soul, while the deeply interesting question is unsettled, wherewithal shall a sinner appear before God? It is evident that the more intense this desire, the more intense and diligent also will his search be after the object of it. And should the one become the engrossing desire of his heart, the other will become the paramount business of his life. It will be his supreme and unremitting earnestness, to seek after God. Should he at length find Him and find Him fully, there is nothing at least to surprise us in the result. It is in keeping with a law, which, in every department of attainable knowledge, holds universally. Generally speaking, in proportion to the laboriousness of the search, is the largeness of the discovery. There is nothing mysterious in this. It seems to follow in the way of natural consequence; nor should we wonder, when the heart or the eye

is thus so strongly, nay so singly set on a blissful eternity, as that the whole concern is to explore the avenue which leads to it—that the fruit of such singleness of eye is the whole body becoming full of light.

Before we pass on to the next reason of this connection between the one thing and the other, let us appeal to the consciences of those who are now present on the subject of the reason which we have just given. If they hold it to be an invalid reason, can they say so on their own experience? Have they given all diligence to this great inquiry, and find that they remain in darkness notwithstanding? Have they striven with all their might after a knowledge of the things which belong to their peace, and yet abide as far from peace and from satisfying light as before? Can they appeal to the fatiguing yet fruitless toils of a most laborious and long-sustained inquiry, that has yet terminated in nothing? What have been their readings, what their importunate and persevering supplications at the door of heaven's sanctuary? How long have they kept by the attitude, or how frequently have they been found in it—of the Bible in their hands, and a prayer in their hearts that in the light of God's own revelation they may clearly see light? He holds Himself out as the rewarder of those who seek Him diligently—what we ask has been their diligence in seeking God? Do they expect to find Him without diligence; and while they are indulging in spiritual sloth, or are diligent about other even temporal things, the light of His countenance and His ways is at once to break forth upon them?

They have never found; but in good truth it is because they have never sought. At least their seeking has never amounted to striving. It has been nothing like the strenuous and sustained effort of one singly bent on the good of his eternity; and giving himself, with perfect singleness of heart and of eye, to this great consummation. Day after day, the question has been postponed; and they have put off to a more convenient season the labour of its full and serious entertainment; and, in reference to the peculiar business of their eternity, to the good and the interest of their unperishable souls, their habit all their lives long has been that of a dull and languid procrastination—with now and then perhaps some fruitless sighs, some heaving yet transient and wholly unproductive aspirations. But never all the while a real taking up of the question—a real and substantial and industrious prosecution of it. They do not make a business of this inquiry at all. They do not go about it, with the plain and practical object of bringing it to a settlement. On the subject of their eternity, they acquiesce in the most vague and unsubstantial generalities; and are at no pains that it should be otherwise. Yet they complain of darkness. We tell them that they have not bestirred themselves to the search. They distrust the efficacy of a search. We tell them that they are no judges, they have never tried.

II. Our next reason, however difficult to propound, we hold to be one of main efficacy in this process. He who hath singled out and set his

heart or his eye upon eternity, proves himself to be rightly impressed by the worth of eternity. He begins with a just estimate of the relation between eternity and time. The effect of this is incalculable. It rectifies, just because it reverses, all the imaginations of nature. There is on this subject a grand practical delusion, the bane and the bewilderment of our species. To our optics, time stands forth in the characters of eternity; and eternity has the insignificance of time. All our ideas of magnitude are inverted. The substance appears the shadow, and the shadow the substance. The correction of this would wholly change our mental panorama, and throw a new light over it. Let eternity and time be but seen in their just proportions; and by this alone the scenery of the future, if we may so express it, would be completely transformed. What is now the foreground, and occupies the whole field of vision, would shrink into nothing; and the now dim and shadowy ulterior would brighten into vivid interest, and expand into magnificence before us. This single rectification would introduce justness and order into the whole perspective of our being—just as the assumption of a great and true principle in science, might bring order out of confusion, and light up as it were a whole chaos of phenomena. It is only by this reference to eternity, that we can make a right survey of human existence—just as a map in geography is rightly constructed, by the references of a correct and comprehensive scale. And what a different representation do we attain of life, when we thus proceed, on the high scale of eternity, to measure

off all and to subordinate all—giving to each event or interest its right place, and its right proportion, in reference to the whole. It would give us a similar command over a prospect in time, that the loftiest summit in the landscape gives over a prospect in space. Among the localities of the every-day world, or among the urgencies of every-day life, we are alike lost in the nearness, and multitude of besetting objects; and are strangely insensible to the comparative littleness of present things, whether in space or in duration. It is by an enlargement of the view that this error is corrected —in the one case by an extended vision, in the other by an exalted faith. It is this which reduces to their proper size and importance, all temporal things. The universal error would be met by a universal correction. Could we now see to be little all that we falsely imagined to be great, and see to be great all that we falsely disregarded as little —this of itself would dissipate a world of illusions, and on this single change in the habit and perception of the mental eye, the whole body would become full of light.

And let us here make another appeal to the consciences of men. What are the objects of greatest significancy and moment in their eyes? Let their lives declare it. Let the whole drift of their thoughts and affections declare it. Does not the business of every day proceed on a constant exaggeration of things present, and as constant an extenuation of things future and eternal? It is thus that there runs a great practical illusion, through the whole system of their affairs. It may

well be called a perpetual error, that has the dominion over them; and by acting perpetually upon it, their darkness thickens the more as they grow older—just like any other infatuation, which becomes the more powerful the longer it is persisted in. In the very wisdom of the secular man, there is throughout a radical fallacy—proceeding as it does on the fancied worth of that which is insignificant, on the magnitude of that which is paltry, on the endurance of that which is evanescent and perishable. The light which is in him is darkness, and how great therefore is that darkness! It envelops every thing. It distorts every thing. He sees, but it is through a false medium—so false, that even infinity is reversed into its opposite—the infinitely great Being regarded as nothing; the infinitely small absorbing every desire of the heart, and monopolising the whole field of vision. It is obvious that by the simple dispersion of this medium, the whole aspect and character of things would be changed. It would give rise to another and an opposite manifestation. It were more than the overthrow of an error. It were the subversion of a system of error—the removal of a false light, which tinged every thing and discoloured every thing. As by the hold of one right principle, we are enabled to rectify a thousand wrong conclusions—so, with but a right sense of eternity, those multiplied errors would vanish away, by which the whole of human existence is hourly and habitually infested. The grand deception of life would be cleared away; and on this one simple

change in the optics of the mind, the whole body would become full of light.

It is in things of sacredness as in things of science. There is often a virtue in one principle to cast a pervading illumination and glory over the whole field of contemplation. The subordination of the thing that is formed, to Him who formed it is such a principle—it being one of universal application, and that leaves nothing untouched, as comprehensive of all that exists, of the Creator who made all of the creature who received his all. It is therefore well said, that the fear of God is the beginning, or the first principle, of wisdom. The overpassing greatness of Eternity to Time, is another such principle—it being one that affixes its character of magnitude or minuteness to every object, of wisdom or folly to every pursuit. The two, we believe, are never apart—each being implicated with the other, so that the inlet of either to the mind, were the admission of a light that should overspread the whole of its perspective. And the man who looked singly to the interest of his Eternity, laying up all his treasure there; or who looked singly to the will of his God, cleaving to Him as the alone Master of his services—will experience the fulfilment of our text, the guidance of a celestial wisdom in all his doings, a glory from above shining on all his paths.

But there may be a singleness of eye either in the direction of Earth, or in the direction of Heaven; and we hold it the special aim of our text, to warn against the vacillations of those, who look at

both and strive to effect a compromise between them. They would fain unite the interests of both worlds; and it will generally be found of such, that they look habitually to the one, and but occasionally to the other. Whenever the pursuit of an everlasting good is superseded by the pursuit of a merely temporal good, it has something more than a distracting, it has a darkening effect also. The mind is not only divided between an object of sense and an object of faith; but a deeper shade of concealment is thrown over the remote and unseen object. Immortality, viewed as a dogma may be as zealously asserted as ever; but immortality, viewed as a living and substantial reality, is sadly bedimmed by every act of practical devotion to the power of things present and things sensible. It may retain its place as an article of the creed, yet without being credited—for, be the profession what it may, to the man whose affections grovel among the things of earth, heaven is but a nonentity and a name. The very desire of any worldly thing, is an homage done to the worth and magnitude of that which is temporal; and is fitted to disturb the estimate we should otherwise have formed, of the overpassing magnitude of that which is eternal. It lays us open to that most bewildering of all sophistry—the sophistry of the affections. When the choice and the judgment draw opposite ways, the judgment is at length perverted in the conflict and counteraction of the two adverse influences. The light of the understanding is, as it were, smothered under that perversity of the will by which it is constantly thwarted and overborne.

The superior worth of eternity may on occasions be feebly recognized; but the superior worth of time is always the principle that is fully acted on. In this war of contradiction, where the conduct perpetually belies the creed, and the creed as perpetually reclaims but without effect against the conduct, there is an augmenting and aggravating darkness—till both the power and light of conscience are extinguished, and life settles down into a system of obstinate, often irrecoverable delusion.

SERMON IX.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

"Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven."—ACTS i. 11.

THERE are certain great steps, or successive periods, in the divine administration—each of which forms an era in the history of our world. The first scriptural era is from the Creation to the Flood. The second from the Flood to the call of Abraham. The third from the call of Abraham to the promulgation of the law in mount Sinai. The fourth is from the promulgation of the law to the end of the Jewish economy. And the last, within whose limits ours forms one of the many generations, is distinctly marked both by its epoch and by its close —the former by Christ's ascension from our world —the latter by His reappearance in the sky, when the same Jesus who was taken up into Heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven.

It is good to connect our brief, our little day, with the roll and succession of these great changes in the spiritual jurisprudence of our species. It is elevating to look at the place which belongs to ourselves, in this magnificent progression; and it

tends to sublime, to solemnize human life, as it were, above the vulgarity of its daily and familiar concerns—when thus enabled to assign the point which we occupy in the march or evolution of that great drama, which commences with the birth, and terminates with the dissolution of our world. But it does more than exalt the imagination. It serves both to inform, and powerfully to impress the conscience. It teaches what the attitude and the preparation are, which correspond to the high position that we fill, and to the high expectations that await us. Altogether its effect, or rather perhaps its tendency, is to abstract and to lift the soul above the dust of that earthliness in which it so habitually grovels; and, when thus mingling the calls of duty with the contemplation of the earlier and the later stages in the history of our race, we as place ourselves at the side of the saints and the righteous men of other days, and rise to a sort of kindred elevation with the ancients of inspired writ—with the holy patriarchs who have gone before us.

At none of the periods which we have now specified, did God leave Himself without a witness, or ever abandon the care and government of our species. Often as the world may have lost sight of Him, He kept by the world, and made it the busy scene both of His purposes and fulfilments. Even when the world in its blindness thought least of God, God was not sitting in the state and distance of lofty unconcern to the world; but, intent on great designs, was He directing all the springs, and presiding over all the movements of its history.

And so at each term of this mighty series of changes, we behold a demonstration of the Godhead. It was so, when, moved by the wickedness that was upon the earth, He by the waters of the flood, swept off all its living generations, and left but one memorial of our race in the preservation of one family. It was so again, when mankind were again lapsing into their old forgetfulness of Himself; and He, to keep up His name and His remembrance in the midst of them, singled out another family, and threw a wall of separation around them. It was most visibly so, when He made His descent upon Sinai; and the voice of the Eternal was heard by the thousands of Israel; and the flame, and the smoke, and the thunder, gave manifest tokens of a present Deity; and the law which issued from His lips, bespoke Him to be still the Governor of men, and still the asserting Lord of His own Creation. But most of all, among these evolutions of the Supreme which are already past, have we to regard that age of miracle when the Saviour lived, and that event of deepest mystery when He died—when, the old economy waxing away like a temporary apparatus for some greater and more enduring consummation, and a new economy emerging out of the ruins and the tremendous overthrow of the one that had gone before it, gave distinct evidence of a new and a more advanced era in the government of our world. And this brings us downward to ourselves, upon whom the latter ends of the world have come. The era in which we live has had its striking outset, and it will have its awful termination. The ascent of our Saviour begun

the era—the descent of our Saviour will finish it. There is a peculiar character which such a beginning and such an ending of our dispensation give to the dispensation itself; and the question is, what are our responding duties and responding expectations?

But we must first advert to the purpose, for which Christ came into the world. You are aware of God as its Moral Governor. You are aware both of a law written on the tablet of an express revelation, and of a law written upon our hearts. You know that Law and Government and Authority are words without meaning, if not accompanied by securities and sanctions; and, more particularly, if disobedience is not to be challenged and not to be reckoned with. With these undoubted principles, and the equally undoubted fact that all had fallen short of the commandments of God—in what other light can we regard mankind, than as a revolted family? and responsible for their defection, at the bar of that rightful sovereign whose authority they had set at nought? The question at issue, was one which affected the dignity of the Lawgiver; and there were an end of all jurisdiction, if God might enact and yet not enforce, or if man might disobey and yet not incur the condemnation and the penalty. Behold then the state to which we had reduced ourselves—a state of controversy with our Maker; and on the settlement of which, His attributes and the unchangeable principles of His government were at stake. It was indeed a fearful thing for our species, when there appeared no other way of deliverance from ruin, but that which would bring

dishonour on the throne of Heaven, and lay a reflection on the truth and majesty of Him who sitteth thereon. And hence the peculiar errand on which our Saviour came. It was to open wide the portals of mercy for a guilty world—yet to open them so, as to cast not an obscurity but a heightened lustre on all the other perfections of the Godhead. It was to resolve that mystery which angels desired to look into—to reconcile the honour of the law with the forgiveness of those who had broken it—and at once to heap blessings upon the head of the sinner, and to magnify all the prerogatives of the commandment that he had violated. This was the knot of difficulty which had to be untied. This was the wall of partition which had to be broken down. Or this the impassable gulph, over which there had to be thrown a high-way of communication between the rebels of our exiled world, and their offended Sovereign. And we know, or at least we know in part, what our Saviour did and suffered to achieve this enterprise—of the descent that He made from Heaven; of the sojourn that He had on earth; of the incarnation by which He veiled the glories of His divinity, under the likeness of a man; of the preternatural conflicts, and temptations, and agonies, that He had to undergo; of His mysterious warfare with the powers of darkness; and the season of deep endurance that He had to travel through ere that victory was won, and His own arm had brought to Him salvation. A contest this where were many spectators. The eminencies of Heaven were crowned; and the darkness, and the earthquake, and the opening of graves, and the coming

forth of their dead, all gave token to the big and busy importance of what was going on. It was amid these symptoms of distress in nature, that our Saviour expired; and the soul which He poured out an offering for sin, after the unknown history of a few days, re-entered the body from which it had departed; and, coming again into familiar converse with men, did He now manifest the new and the living way of access, that Himself had opened, and by which the farthest off in guilt and depravity amongst us might draw nigh unto God. And thus, having both finished the work of our reconciliation and proclaimed it, did He leave the world to the hopes and the appropriate duties of that new economy which Himself had instituted—of that new era which Himself had ushered in.

But, to complete our grounds for a practical application—let us further think of the relationship in which He now stands to the world; and of the regard which He now casts towards it; and of the interest wherewith He is now looking down, to see whether there be any consequent movement on our part, by which we might accord to the movement made upon His. When He returned to the place which He now occupies, He would be hailed by the hosts of Paradise as the Finisher of a great enterprise. It behoved to be a re-entrance of triumph, after the toils and the sufferings of an arduous undertaking; and loud and high must have been the gratulations of welcome to Him, who, travelling in the greatness of His strength over all obstacles, established a reunion, and reared a pathway of communication between Earth and Heaven.

And let us only conceive, by what other and by what opposite feelings, must those of rapture and benevolent triumph have been succeeded—if, on looking to this pathway so laboriously reared, it had been found without a traveller—if, unmoved by all the signals of invitation and by all the facilities of a now provided access, the regardless world had remained as sluggish and alienated as before—if it had been found that the door of acceptance was opened in vain, and a highway of approach over the else dreary and untrodden interval was constructed in vain—and if, after the victory had been gotten, and the toil and the contest and the hazard of the great mediatorship been ended, unthankful man, in whose behalf it was all undertaken, should set it utterly at nought; and, cleaving to that world from which neither the threats of a coming judgment nor the offers of a present salvation could disengage him, he should, heedless alike of the punishment and of the pardon, stamp a nullity on all the wonders of redeeming love, and trample the Redeemer's work into utter and most affronting insignificance.

There are three distinct proprieties which belong to the condition of those who live in our present era—the era that has begun with the ascent, and that is to terminate with the descent of the Saviour. The first is a high sense of the worth of that salvation which Christ hath achieved, and which He now offers to the children of men. The second is that change of desire and affection, which is induced by our acceptance of it. And the third is

that abundant righteousness of life by which the profession of Christianity, is adorned and its Author and Finisher is well pleased.

I. What an outrage is cast on the Saviour's enterprise, when, instead of being prized and sought after as a thing of worth, it is slighted, and by those too, for whom it was designed and executed, as a thing of worthlessness. The likest case to it which we can imagine, is that of a physician, who announces himself as the inventor of a sovereign remedy; and circulates at large his gratuitous offers; and rears the magnificent office, to which in crowds his suffering patients might repair; and inscribes upon its front both the freeness and the efficacy of his great specific, and in such flaming characters as might be seen and read of all men. We ask you to think of the felt mortification, if, after this parade and expectancy, not one individual should be found, who responds to the big and the blazoned overtures—if, after weeks and months of idle tarrying, no single applicant should come to the door; and all the pomp, and all the promise of this enterprise, should be utterly put to shame by the neglect of a contemptuous and unbelieving public. Is it not grievous to think, that such is the very scorn, and such the very outrage, now inflicted by the world upon the Saviour!—that He, the minister of the true sanctuary, and whose office it is to wait at the tabernacle of Heaven for the approaches of all who are weary and heavy-laden, is just so put to shame!—that in lightly esteeming Christ, we virtually treat Him and all His biddings and proclamations of welcome with the cruellest

derision, even the derision of our indifference and distrust?—that thus we mock the enterprise on which He came, and cause His attendant angels to blush at the slight cast by the world upon Him, who is so oft announced in the hearing of men, as the exalted Prince and the mighty Saviour? O, let us cease to marvel, when told, that the thunders of a violated law are but as soft and feeble whispers, when compared with the vengeance of a rejected gospel; and that in the day when Jesus shall so come from heaven, in like manner as He was seen go into Heaven, that on that day, the foullest profligacy of heathen lands, shall be more mildly dealt with, than the decent ungodliness of those who have heard of mercy and have despised it.

So, we need be at no loss to comprehend the principles which are now at work in Heaven, and which will at length break forth upon the world in that awful manifestation—the wrath of the Lamb. It really need not be marvelled at, that they, who do now slumber in the depths of spiritual lethargy and unconcern, shall then be overtaken with saddest fearfulness. The provocation is quite intelligible, which will then cause the insulted dignity of Heaven to look out in characters of menace on a despairing world. We might learn from the workings of our moral nature, how it is, that, simply by living as many of you do in neglect of the Saviour, and thus despising the riches of His forbearance and long-suffering, you treasure up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. You have only to look to the distinctive character of our

era. The Saviour hath gone up into Heaven, and hath there taken His place as a High Priest for sinners at the right hand of God. He is there waiting on. He is marking as it were the fruit and the efficacy of His own far-sounded achievement. He is observing how the world now replies to it, and is in earnest watch for the fruit of the travail of His own soul. Like the king who hath departed into a far country, and who is afterwards to return, He hath gone to some place of absence and mystery away from our world—whence He will come again, and take account of the affairs of His government. And meanwhile, He eyes from afar, how it is that His overtures have sped, and how it fares with the gospel which He left behind Him. And the unavoidable result of such a state is, that if you have received all this grace in vain—if, listless and lawless as ever, the offers of the gospel have failed to attract, even as the terrors of the broken commandment had failed to arouse you—if, sunk in profoundest apathy, you think not, and care not, of the dread alternative, that he who hath the Son hath life, and he who hath not the Son hath not life,—if the preaching of His Cross be foolishness in your ears, or at least so unproductive of influence, as to have brought no hope of Heaven into your hearts, and to have imprinted none of the character of Heaven upon your walk and conversation—if, in the busy prosecution of your own entire and unbroken earthliness, you still live at a distance from God; and, while He by His Son is stretching forth His hand you are disregarding—Be assured, as you

would of any moral necessity, that He who went up into Heaven the gracious and inviting Saviour, will come down from Heaven the indignant judge; and, that if the intermediate season in which you now live and have your opportunity be not improved by you into the season of your redemption—it will be declared by Him on that day to have been the season, in which you have sealed, with your own hands, the sentence of a final and everlasting reprobation.

One very palpable mark of your indifference to what Christ hath done, is that the report of it falls so heavily and so bluntly upon your hearing. Though proclaimed Sabbath after Sabbath—this brings no such relief, as that which captives feel when told of their coming liberty. The only exercise to which you seem at all moved by the utterance of a gospel truth, is that you recognise its orthodoxy, and so approve of it; and that, without any visitation upon the soul, of the gladness and the hope and the triumph, which irradiated the walk of the primitive Christians. This is insulting to the Saviour, because it proves His salvation to be unbelieved and undervalued. It is a mortifying return for His services. He now looketh down from the eminence to which He had ascended; and it was at least a natural expectation, that the re-opening of Heaven's gate upon the world, and the lifting away of those obstructions which had blocked the entrance thereunto, would have set all in motion—that men would have testified their homage to this great enterprise, by the readiness and the rapture wherewith they accorded to it; and that thus it

would have been responded to by earth's sinful families. Our pleasure in the offered redemption, would have been to the Redeemer the most pleasing of all acknowledgments. And what must be His opposite feeling, when, instead of this, the tidings, which ought to have lighted up an ecstasy in every bosom, are heard by this world's vast majority with perfect unconcern; and when, in reference to the mass and multitude of our species, the labour of His wondrous achievement has been wholly thrown away. That the gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus is treated by many as a useless thing, may be seen from the listlessness of many a Christian auditory, when the transaction is expounded; and from those intervals of many a day and many a week in the private history of individuals, throughout which, amid the urgency of life's ordinary cares, it is never thought of. It is the unimportance which they hereby put upon the Saviour—it is the cold and sullen apathy wherewith His overtures are received by them—it is the pre-engagement of their hearts with the frivolities of life, and the utter powerlessness even of the largest offers and the largest hopes of an inheritance above to do it away—it is that thankless lethargy, out of which the message of pardon and of the price whereat it was obtained, is unable to move them—it is their insensibility, both to the great privilege which is held forth to sinners, and to the great expense of suffering and degradation and labour at which it was earned for them by the Saviour—These form the constituents of a provocation, which is now accumulating every day in the breast of the offended High

Priest, and which, on that day when He shall come down from Heaven, even as He was seen go into Heaven, will fall with one overwhelming discharge upon them.

You may be enabled to conceive from this, why God has so much complacency, in the trust and in the rejoicing confidence, which a believer feels in the promises of the gospel. It is setting on the work of His own Son its proper estimation. Our joy is a right acknowledgment, just as our indifference is a grievous and a highly displeasing affront. And thus it is, that when His disciples persisted in sluggishness and sorrow, Christ was grieved for it; and that God resents, as He would the imputation of a lie, when they to whom salvation is preached, will not lay their confiding hold upon it; and that the peace, and the joy, and the glorying of Faith, are all so acceptable in His sight; and that the dread and the distrust and the despondency, all of them sensations opposite to these, are felt by Him to be so injurious, that, among those who shall have part in the second death, are ranked the fearful and the unbelieving. Thus are we bidden to rejoice in the Lord; and when, in the face of all that our Saviour hath done, we remain in the bondage either of earthly griefs or of earthly affection He is entitled to feel the indignation of slighted and underrated services.

II. But secondly, this acceptance of Christ involves in it something more than the admission of a new hope. It involves the acquisition of a new character; and this cannot be accomplished with-

out what is painful to nature—the surrender of old desires and affections to the mastery of new desires and affections, which are substituted in their room. There is not merely the translation into a new hope. There is the translation into a new practical habit. The hope in fact will induce the habit. The man who looks with a delighted eye on the open gate of Heaven, and the now unobstructed path which leads to it—that man must, at the same time, be aspiring after Heaven's graces; and must have entered on those moralities both of heart and life, which give to Heaven all its gladness. A man could no more rejoice in the prospect of the real Heaven of Eternity, without a taste and a desire towards its spiritual excellence—than he could rejoice in the prospect of entering for life upon a foreign land, whose government and customs and people were every way hateful to him. It is thus that the faith of the gospel induces, or brings in sure and speedy train after it, the character of the gospel. The very entrance upon its hope implies a turning of the soul. By it, there is not only a looking of the inner man after another portion—but there is a choice of that portion. The man who believes, takes up with Heaven as his eternal habitation; and this he cannot do without a transference of the heart to other things, than those whereby it wont to be occupied. Now, it is the aversion of men to this transference, which forms the great obstacle to their acceptance of the gospel. They do not believe, because they love the darkness rather than the light. Their heart is engaged with things present, and agreeably engaged; and

hence their disinclination to things future. They have no other wish than to be as they are. The gravitation of their souls is towards earth; and they want not this to be thwarted or disturbed by any cause, that would impress an aspiring tendency in the opposite direction. This is the real secret of their indisposition to the overtures of the gospel. Their mind is darkened, just because their fond and foolish heart is darkened. They labour under a blindness, no doubt—but it is because they labour under a moral unwillingness., They do not see the evidence which would give them faith; but it is because they shut their eyes, or, which is the same thing, they will not attend to the evidence. This world contents them; and they are utterly indisposed for any overtures at all about another world. It is vain to tell them that Christ makes a free offer of happiness to them all—if it be not happiness, or be not pleasure, in the way they like it. They will not part with the earthly for the heavenly. They will not give up their carnal preferences, to which they are urged by nature—for those spiritual delights which are held out to every believer, for his recreation in time, for his full and satisfying enjoyment through eternity. They do not breathe with any kindredness of feeling in a spiritual atmosphere; and, children as they are of sense and secularity, they refuse to turn from their own way. They will not come unto Christ that they may have life; and He, looking down upon them from the mediatorial throne to which He has been exalted, sees, that, after all He has done to roll away the obstacles between earth and

heaven—that after the toil and the agony of the great propitiation have all been expended—that after barriers have been levelled, and crooked places been made straight, and rough places plain, and a highway for sinners has been thrown across the dark and dreary infinite which separated them from God—that after by the strength of His own right arm he had forced this mysterious passage, and planted upon it the flag of invitation—He now sees, after He has thus brought eternity within their reach, that, fastened in the thraldom of their own base and inglorious affections, they remain immoveable; that they continue to grovel as before, and it matters not to them what facilities have been struck out or what the avenues that are now opened to the paradise above—because earth is dearer to them than Heaven; and the delights of this sensible though passing world far more enchanting to their spirits, than all the splendid honours and all the offered joys of immortality.

And it is just because this rejection of the gospel is a thing of will upon our side, that it is a thing of provocation upon His side. Had our unbelief been the blindness of those who could not see, there would have been no room for wrath on the part of the Saviour. But it is the blindness of those who will not see; and it is this which gives its moral force to the remonstrance—"Ye will not come—or rather ye are not willing to come that ye may have life." We can be at no loss to perceive, how the Saviour must stand affected by this treatment on man's part of that economy over which He now presides, and which He Himself hath so

laboriously instituted. The scorn, or at least the apathy, wherewith man puts the glories of the purchased inheritance away from him—the choice that he still makes of time, after immortality has been thus brought near to him—the inefficiency of the gospel with all its encouragements, to lure him from the world and bring him to reconciliation with God—the sinful and the sordid appetency for earth, which not even the now accessible Heaven with its pure and perpetual joys can overcome—the inert and invincible sluggishness, wherewith he still adheres to the carnalities of the old man, and from which all the proclamations of grace cannot move him—the busy rounds of pleasure or of gain or of ambition, at which he keeps plying as assiduously, as if earth were the platform on which he was to expatiate for ever—All these mark such an obstinate affinity to sense, such a rooted dislike and diversity of his taste from all sacredness, as will go most effectually on the day of judgment to characterize and to condemn him. The free gospel hath acted as a criterion, for fixing on which side of the question between earth and Heaven it is that his affections lie. And He who sees him from the place of ascension which He now occupies—He who hath consecrated for him, by His own blood, a path by which the sinner if he will might return unto God—if in the face of this the sinner will not, might not He the Saviour, on the day in which He comes down and takes account of the world, fill his mouth with an overwhelming argument? Will not that be a clear justice, which shuts out from the high and the holy abode, him who all life long hath

persisted in the earthliness which he loved, and from which even the open gate of Heaven and the voice of welcome that issued therefrom could not disengage him? In going up unto Heaven Christ is said to have arisen there for our justification. But in coming down from Heaven, He will come for the enhanced condemnation of those who have declined His grace, and so have kept by their own guiltiness. They shall be made to eat the fruit of their own ways; and as they chose to walk in their own counsels, by these counsels they shall fall.

That prisoner is not to blame, who makes no attempt to escape from the dungeon whose gates are impregnably shut against him. But should he refuse the guidance of the benefactor who has thrown open these gates, and who offers to conduct him to a place of enlargement, where he shall have air and light and liberty—he verily is the author of his own undoing, if he pine and perish among the noxious damps of his prison-house. And it is thus that Christ now offers to set the spiritual captive free. He hath cleared away all legal obstructions. He hath provided an open door of access unto God. He hath opened a clear exit for us all from the place of condemnation, and now invites us to that glorious liberty which consists in the service of love and willingness. It is not easy to conceive the physical preference of a dark and dismal confinement, to a free range on the domain of nature; but we see exemplified every day, the moral preference of a continued thraldom amongst the idolatries of sense and of the world, to an outlet or emancipation of the soul into the regions of sacredness and of

spiritual health and of spiritual harmony. Ours is the era of a great embassy from heaven to earth; and men are beseeched to make good that 'escape from slavery which has been provided in the gospel; and Christ, from the eminence on which He now stands, is watching and witnessing how His messengers are received and what is the effect of their solicitations. This is the character of our interesting period; and our doom for eternity hangs upon it. It is fixed by our own choice. Should we love to breathe in the atmosphere of spiritual death, it is the only atmosphere that we shall breathe in for ever. And if now that Christ hath gone up into Heaven, we follow Him not in faith and by upward aspirations there—when He again comes down from Heaven, He will recognise us to be still carnal—He will deal with us as enemies.

III. But Christianity implies something more than one great and initial surrender of affection on the part of the inner man. There are daily and hourly services, which come historically after this. There is something more than one great revulsion from the old habit of nature. We do not merely pass into another state. We enter upon another path; and in so doing launch forth among all the activities of a sustained and unremitting progress. It is not enough that there be in our heart the desires of righteousness—there must be upon our history the deeds of righteousness. Christ becomes the master of our services, as well as of our affections; and it is not only the heart which responds to Him in gratitude, but the hand moves and is

obedient at the bidding of his voice. The one in fact is the test of the other. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." To complete the relation between Christ and His disciples, He must be throned in authority over them, as well as be the supreme object of their regards; and then it is that His doctrine, instead of a controversial speculation, becomes the efficient principle both of a new character and of a new life. The ultimate design of His economy, in fact, is not to justify but to sanctify men. It is to evolve a new moral harmony out of the chaos of our present world—and then only do His word and doctrine prosper unto that for which they have been sent, when the disciples thereof emerge into virtue and become thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is when He succeeds in making you holy and obedient creatures, that He sees in you of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. The same eye which gazed with delight on the lilies of the field, perceives with a higher delight the efflorescence of Heaven's graces upon your person. The great object of His administration, is to build up and beautify a moral landscape, in the midst of which He might everlastingly rejoice. And for this purpose, He who judgeth by your fruits would train and transform you into trees of righteousness, which, though now rooted in the soil and sediment of the world, may, under the cultivation of His own spiritual husbandry, be at length meet for being transplanted into the paradise of God. Now it is by acts of Heavenly obedience, that you promote this heavenly vegetation. It is by the doings of the hand on the side of virtue,

that you strengthen and confirm still more the desires of the heart after it. It is by the busy conduct of the disciple, that a reflex influence is sent back upon his soul; and all those principles are fixed more tenaciously than before, which enter into the formation of the disciple's character. And so by the readier humanity, and the stricter temperance, and the profounder humility, and the godlier watchfulness and sobernesss and fear of every day, do you rise from one degree of grace unto another; and carry onward that great object of sanctification, which the heart of your Redeemer is if not solely yet supremely set upon.

Thus it is, that, by the deeds done in the body, you will be judged in the great day of reckoning. It is upon these that our Saviour will demonstrate you to be His own. As the tree is known by its fruits, so He will make known by your deeds to the august assembly of men and of angels, that you are of His husbandry, and fit for being removed into His Father's vineyard in Heaven. It is worthy of observation, that, on the sentence being declared, it will be said that you are His—not inasmuch as you have believed, nor inasmuch as you have desired, but inasmuch as you have done. Your destiny will be made to hang direct upon your doings—as being in truth the best vouchers, both for the feelings of your heart, and the faith of your understanding. And we bid you think therefore, of the busy interest and regard wherewith your judge in Heaven is now looking on; and of the book of record and remembrance which is now before Him; and of the materials which He is now

gathering from your each day's history, for the examinations and the judgments of a future day. He is now on that post of observation, whither He has ascended for a season, and whence he descries the whole line of your history in the world. But that season will come to its close; and then there will ensue another great movement in God's administration. He who was seen go into Heaven, will again come down from Heaven; and will be met in living array by the men of all generations. He will come fraught with the archives of your present history; and, now your vigilant and unerring witness, will He then be your impartial judge. Do you live under an affecting sense of these plain but all important realities? Do you ever once think of Christ's eye being upon you? Do you ever once think of His judgment awaiting you? Do these enter at all as elements into your deliberation? And we would ask whether it is possible that you can stand then with acceptance before Him—if now, the general habit of your mind be that of listless unconcern, either to the cognizance which He takes of you at present, or to the reckoning which He will have with you in future—braving alike the omniscience of His present regards, the justice and the certainty of His coming retributions?

And now would we have you to lay it upon your consciences, whether you indeed lie under a real and practical sense of the economy which has been set up at this period of the world—whether you conform to the spirit and the character of God's existing administration—whether, while the Judge at His right hand is impending over you and mark-

ing all your ways, you at the same time feel and move as if an eye from Heaven were looking on—or whether, as if disjoined from all relationship with aught that is above, or as if the planet that you occupy had drifted away beyond the cognizance of the upper world, is the whole style of your history upon earth just what it would have been, though the ascended Jesus had taken His eternal leave; and, on quitting the abodes of humanity, had quitted all superintendence of our concerns? But He causes us to know in the text, that He has not so quitted us—that He still keeps a hold of our species—that, instead of having left us for ever, He is to come again and to have a visible meeting with each and all of the members of the human family—that, however now He may stand concealed from mortal view in the remoteness and mystery of the place to which He has gone, the time is coming when every eye shall behold Him; and the gaze of a universal world shall be turned towards Him, as He approaches the judgment-seat fraught with the materials of a solemn examination; and which materials He is now gathering from the doings of your present day, and of your past yesterday, and of your future morrow—thereby stamping an eternal importance on all the passages of your familiar history, and giving to the hourly details of your business in life a bearing on your destiny for ever. And tell me, ye men who from Sabbath to Sabbath breathe in no other air than that of irreligion, and who if you do come to church receive but a passing emotion, that, like the glow of sentiment or poetry, soon vanishes away—tell me how it is possible that

you can escape the frown and the condemnation and the awful penalty, when thus the whole habit of your existence is at utter variance with the realities of your state; and you shall have passed from your infancy to your grave as recklessly along, as if there were to be no resurrection, no trial, no fearfulness beyond death, no life that can feel or suffer or be the subject of wrath and anguish and tribulation through eternity.

We may conclude with stating what appears to us one great distinction between a religionist and an ordinary man. There is a pervading unity and greatness of object in the life of the former. In that of the latter there is a fitful and fluctuating waywardness. The one is like a voyage, where the drift of every movement is towards a certain quarter of the heavens, and with the view to a fixed place of arrival. The other is like the random the ever-varying course of a vessel, that has been abandoned and is at the mercy of a thousand capricious impulses. The one, in selecting his end, has shot ahead as it were of all that is intermediate between him and the grave; and so his high and habitual reference is ever towards that place in the history of his being, which forms the exit of his time—the entrance of his eternity. The other may have selected his ends also; but lying a short way in the distance before him, they are ever shifting and shaping anew among the mutabilities of life, with the deceits of human fancy, with the disappointments of human foresight. The one familiarly conversant with the great elements of death and judgment and life everlasting, moves along the path which bears him

onward with the lofty consciousness of one, the simplicity yet comprehensive grandeur of whose aim sublimes his spirit above the cares and the passions of common-place humanity. The other, heedless and perhaps unseeing of the remote but ever-during interest of his existence, vacillates and is lost in the countless multitude of those lesser influences, each of which gains one little hour of ascendancy, and then passes fruitless and forgotten away from him. His journey is like the aimless ramble of a schoolboy, when compared to the high bearing of him who walks through life with the gait of an immortal creature—who knows that every footstep brings him nearer to Heaven, and whose daily advances in sanctification are the stepping-stones by which he is conducted to Heaven's glory.

The advice of that wise moralist Dr. Johnson to a friend under the discomfort of some sore annoyance—was to bethink himself of what a trifle it should appear that day twelvemonth. And thus it is that human life is dissipated in a series of trifles. On looking back to that busy alternation of cares and wishes and anxieties, each of which has in its turn been the short-lived tenant of man's restless and ever-brooding spirit, we cannot miss the reflection—what a waste both of comfort and energy on topics which after all have been productive of nothing. It is high time to recall ourselves from these fugitive vanities—to strike a nobler aim, and seek a more enduring interest—and, for this purpose, to cast a further anticipation on the futurity which lies before us. And along the whole of this perspective, there seems no event the contemplation

of which is more fitted to still the spirit into seriousness, or bring it up to the high resolves of Christianity than the coming advent of the Saviour—an event on one side of which lie all the recollections of time, and on the other side all the retributions of eternity. Meanwhile, and ere He take the decisive movement from the mercy-seat which He now fills in Heaven to the judgment-seat which He then will occupy on earth, He bids you all flee from the coming wrath—He holds out even to the guiltiest of you all the sceptre of an offered reconciliation—He plies you alike with the overtures of pardon and the calls of repentance; a pardon sealed by the blood of a satisfying atonement in which He invites you to trust, and a repentance achieved through the aids of a strengthening spirit for which he invites you to pray. This is the season of your full and welcome opportunity. That will be the day of your trial. Now you are urged by the entreaties of a free gospel, and by compliance therewith you propitiate the wrath of the offended Saviour. Then, should you have withheld compliance, will you be judged by the requisitions of a fiery law; and the unaverted, the aggravated wrath of Heaven, will descend in judgment upon your heads. "O Kiss the Son then lest He be angry and while He is in the way—for blessed only shall they be who have put their trust in Him."

SERMON X.

GOD IS LOVE.

"God is love."—JOHN iv. 16.

DID we only give credit to the text, did we but view God as love—on this simple translation into another belief, would there be the translation into another character. We should feel differently of God, the moment that we thought of Him differently; and with the establishment of this new faith, there would instantly emerge a new heart and a new nature.

For let us attend, in the first place, to the original conception of Humanity, placed and constituted as it now is, in reference to this great and invisible Being—secondly, let us adduce the likeliest considerations, the likeliest arguments, by which to overcome this conception, and to find lodgement in the human breast for another and an opposite conception in its place—And, thirdly, let us stop to contemplate the effect of such a change in the state of man's understanding as to God, on the whole system of his feelings and conduct.

I. Under the first general head, then, let it be observed—that there are two reasons why we should conceive God to be so actuated as to inspire us

with terror, or at least with distrust; instead of conceiving Him to be actuated by that love which the text ascribes to Him; and which were no sooner believed than it would set us at ease, and inspire us with delightful confidence.

1. The first of these reasons, which we shall allege, admits of being illustrated by a very general experience of human nature. It may be shortly stated thus—Whenever placed within the reach of any Being, of imagined power but withal of unknown purpose—that Being is the object of our dismay. It is not necessary for this, that we should be positively assured of His hostility. It is enough, that, for aught we know, He may be hostile; and that, for aught we know, He has strength enough for the execution of His displeasure. Uncertainty alone will beget terror; and the fancies of mere ignorance, are ever found to be images of fear. It is thus, that a certain recoil of dread and aversion, would be felt in the presence of a strange animal, whatever the gentleness of its nature—if simply its nature were unknown. And hence, too, the fear of a child for strangers, who must first make demonstration of their love by their gifts, or their caresses—ere they can woo it into confidence. And so also the consternation of savages, on the first approach of a mighty vessel to their shores—more especially if in smoke, and thunder, and feats of marvellous exhibition, it hath given the evidence of its power. It may be a voyage of benevolence; but this they as yet know not. They only behold the power; and power beheld singly is tremendous. And many often are the vain at-

tempts at approximation, the fruitless demonstrations and signals of goodwill, ere they can conquer their distrust; or recall them to free and fearless intercourse, from the woods or the lurking-places to which they had fled for safety. Such then is the universal bias of nature, whenever the power is known and the purpose is unknown. Men give way to the visions of terror, to the dark misgivings of a troubled imagination. The quick and instant suggestion, on all these occasions, is that of fear; and the difficulty, an exceeding difficulty, for it is as if working against a constitutional law or tendency of the heart, is to reassure it into confidence.

If such then be the effect on human feelings of a power that is known, associated with purposes that are unknown—we are not to wonder, that the great and invisible God is invested to our eyes with the imagery of terror. It is verily because great, and at the same time invisible, that we so invest Him. It is precisely because the Being who hath all the energies of nature at command, is at the same time shrouded in mystery impenetrable—that we view Him as tremendous. All regarding Him is inscrutable—the depths of His past eternity—the mighty and unknown extent of His creation—the secret policy or end of His government, a government that embraces an infinity of worlds, and reaches forward to an infinity of ages—All these leave a being so circumscribed in his faculties as man, so limited in his duration and therefore in his experience, in profoundest ignorance of God and of His ways. And then

the inaccessible retirement in which He hides himself from the observation of His creatures here below—the clouds and darkness which are about the pavilion of His residence—the utter impotency of man, to pierce his way beyond the confines of that materialism which hems and incloses him, so as at all to fathom the essence of the Godhead, or to obtain any distinct apprehension of His personality and His being—the silence, the deep unbroken silence of many centuries, insomuch that nature, however distinctly it may tell of His existence, is to our senses a screen of interception in the way of nature's God. There is a mighty gulph of separation—an interval, a mysterious and untrodden interval, between the spirituality of the Godhead on the one hand, and all that the eye of man can see or the ear of man can hear upon the other—a barrier, which man with all his powers of curious and searching inspection cannot force; and across which God, at least for many ages, hath sent forth no direct or visible manifestation of His own person or His own character. And so, whatever the confidence or the manifested kindness may have been in those primeval days, when God walked with man in the bowers of his earthly paradise and among the smiling beauties of its garden—certain it is, that now, exiled from the divine presence, all this confidence has fled. Now that the Divinity is withdrawn from mortal view, man trembles at the thought of Him; and the dread imagination, whether of a present wrath or a coming vengeance, is the only homage which nature renders to an unknown God.

And there is nothing in the varying aspects of Creation, or in the varying fortunes of human life, which can at all alleviate our perplexity, in regard to the final designs or character of God. For if, on the one hand, the smile and the sunshine and the softer beauties of the landscape, would seem to picture forth the milder virtues of the Divinity—these are alternated by other and opposite expressions, in the sweeping flood, and the angry tempest, and that dread thunder from the skies wherewith the mysterious Being who rules in the firmament above overawes a prostrate world. And if, on the one hand, the shelter and abundance and natural affection and unnumbered sweets of many a cottage home, might serve to indicate the profuse benevolence of Him who is the great the universal Parent of the human family—on the other, the cares; the heart-burnings; the moral discomforts; often the pining sickness, or cold and cheerless poverty; more largely and palpably still, the fierce contests unto blood and mutual destruction, even among civilized men; and lastly, as if to crown and consummate all, the death, the unsparing and relentless death, which sweeps off generation after generation, and, in like ghastly triumph, whether among the abodes of the prosperous or unhappy, after the brief subsistence of a few little years, lays all the varieties of human fortune in the dust—These, on the other hand, bespeak, if not a malignant, at least an offended Deity. It is in the midst of such contradictory appearances, that the question of the divine administration becomes a profound, a hopeless enigma—at once to exercise and

baffle all spirits; and the lofty, the unapproachable Being, who presides over it, is the object of our dread because to us mantled in deepest obscurity, is terrible because unknown.

We have only explained one of the two reasons, why nature's conception of God, is such as to inspire terror rather than our grateful or rejoicing confidence; and, ere we proceed to the consideration of the second, we feel strongly inclined, though we should thereby anticipate the next head of discourse, to state, even now, and in immediate sequence to our first reason for thinking hardly and adversely of God, to state, and as far as we are able, enforce the appropriate counterpart argument, by which that reason may be met and ought to be overcome.

The argument then that we are in quest of, is not to be found in the whole range, or within the whole compass of visible nature. It is only to be found in one of the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A certain distrust, nay a certain terror, will still continue to haunt and to disquiet us—so long as any ambiguity continues to rest on the character of God. But there is such an ambiguity; and which no observation of nature, or no experience of human life, can dissipate. Whatever of the falsely or the superstitiously fearful imagination conjures up, because of God being at a distance, can only be dispelled by God, brought nigh unto us. The spiritual must become sensible. The vail, which hides the unseen God from the eye of mortals, must be somehow withdrawn. Now all this has been done once, and done only, in the incarna-

tion of Jesus Christ—He being the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person. The Godhead became palpable to human senses; and man could behold, as in a picture or in distinct personification, the very characteristics of the Being who made him. Then truly did men hold converse with Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. They saw His glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and the very characteristics of the Divinity Himself may be said to have appeared in authentic representation before them, when God manifest in the flesh descended on Judea and sojourned amongst its earthly tabernacles. By this mysterious movement from Heaven to Earth, the dark the untrodden interval, which separates the Corporeal from the Spiritual, was at length overcome. The King eternal and invisible was then placed within the ken of mortals. They saw the Son, and in Him saw the Father also—so that while contemplating the person and the history of a man, they could make a study of the Godhead.

And it is thus the unequivocal demonstration has been given, that God is love. We could not scale the heights of that mysterious ascent, which might bring us within view of the Godhead. It is by the descent of the Godhead unto us, that this great manifestation has been given; and we learn and know of God, from the wondrous history of Him who went about doing good continually. We could not go in search of the viewless Deity, through the depths and the vastnesses of Infinitude; or discover the secret, the untold purposes, that were brooding there. But in no way could a more palpable

exhibition have been made, than when the eternal Son shrined in humanity stepped forth on the platform of visible things, and on the proclaimed errand to seek and to save us. We can now read the character of God, in the human looks and in the human language of Him, who is the very image and visible representation of the Deity. We see it in the tears of sympathy which He shed. We hear it in the accents of tenderness which fell from Him. Even His very remonstrances were those of a meek and gentle nature; for they are remonstrances of deepest pathos, the complaints of a longing and affectionate spirit, against the sad perversity of men bent on their own undoing. When visited with the fear that God looks hardly and adversely towards us, let us think of Him who had compassion on the famishing multitudes; of Him who mourned with the sisters of Lazarus; of Him who, when He approached the city of Jerusalem wept over it, at the thought of its coming desolation. And knowing that the Son is like unto the Father, let us re-assure our hopes with the certainty that God is love.

2. But there is still another reason, why, instead of viewing God as love, we should apprehend Him to be a God of severity and of stern displeasure. And it is not, like the former, but a fearful imagination, a mere product of uncertainty—or resulting from a headlong bias, on the part of the human mind, to the superstitiously dark and terrific, when employed in contemplating what is vast and at the same time unknown. It has a firmer basis to rest upon—not conjured up by fancy from a distant land of shadows; but drawn from the intimacies of one's own con-

sciousness, and suggested by one of the surest facts or findings in the homestead of man's moral nature. The truth is, that, by the constitution of humanity, there is a law of right and wrong in every heart; and which each possessor of that heart knows himself to have habitually violated. But more than this. Along with the felt certainty of such a law, there is the resistless apprehension of a Lawgiver; of a God offended by the disobedience of His creatures; of a Judge, and so of a judgment that awaits us; of a governor, or king in Heaven, between whom and ourselves there is a yet unsettled controversy, and because of which we are disquieted with the thought of a reckoning and a vengeance that are to come. We cannot view God as Love, at the very time that conscience so powerfully tells us to view Him as an enemy. Even though the lights of Nature and Christianity should conspire to inform us that love is a general characteristic of the Divinity, we cannot feel the personal or practical influence of such a contemplation, so long as we are sensible of His special and merited displeasure; and that the truth and the justice and the high and holy attributes of a nature which is unchangeable, seem imperiously to require that this displeasure shall be executed. While haunted by the misgivings of a guilty nature, which tells us of our own danger and our own insecurity, we could no more delight ourselves with the general benevolence of God—than we could luxuriate in tasteful contemplation over the beauties, which, far and wide, even to the most distant horizon, surrounded the mountain's base, if ourselves exposed to the menaces of a bursting

volcano that was above our head. It is thus that we lose all sense of God, so long as we view God through the medium of our own troubled consciences. Even though reasoning alone were to establish this beautiful property in God, as an article of calm and philosophical conviction, the agitations of terror grounded on the consciousness of our self-deservings, would disturb this conviction or displace it altogether. This is not a mere spectral alarm as the former, but has both a definite object and definite cause; and, instead of an airy imagination, is grounded on the universal sense, which nature has of its own actual and ascertained guiltiness.

And this apprehension is not more general than it is strong, and not to be overcome by a mere eloquent or sentimental representation of the Deity—as if He possessed but the one characteristic of tenderness; or as if this were the single excellence of a moral nature, signalized by all that is high and all that is holy. There is a meagre theology that would fain resolve the entire character of God into the one attribute of kindness; but there is a theology of conscience that maintains the ascendancy notwithstanding, and keeps its ground against this frail imagination. To Him who is seated on the throne of the universe, we, in spite of ourselves, ascribe the virtues of the Sovereign as well as the virtues of the parent; and, however much it might have suited our convenience and our wishes, that we could at all times have taken refuge in the general and indefinite placability of God, there are certain immutabilities of truth and nature that cannot thus be disposed of. For, attempt it as we will, we

cannot find repose in the imagination of a law without enforcements, of a lawgiver without authority, of a government without sanctions, of a sentence without effect, and so of guilt without the execution of its proclaimed and threatened penalty. And thus the ever-meddling conscience within, as irrepressible as it is importunate, keeps man in perpetual fear of God; and tells him, with felt authority too, that it is a well-grounded fear. We cannot rid from our apprehension a jurisprudence, a strict and guarded and awful jurisprudence, which enters into the relationship between Heaven and earth; and the honours of which cannot be let down, without despoiling the sanctuary of God of all that is great and all that is venerable. We cannot think of God with confidence or hope, whilst we think of ourselves as delinquents at the bar of that august and unviolable tribunal where He sitteth in judgment over us. We cannot even see Him to be love, through the troubled medium of remorse and fear; and far less rejoice or take comfort in it as a love directed to ourselves.

Now, as, in counteraction to our first reason for viewing God with apprehension and thus losing sight of Him as a God of love, we adduced one peculiar doctrine of Christianity—so, in counteraction to our second reason, we now adduce another peculiar doctrine of Christianity; and that by far the noblest and most precious of its articles. The one was the doctrine of the Incarnation. The other is the doctrine of the Atonement. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son into world to be the propitia-

tion for our sins." By the former, a conquest has been made over the imaginations of ignorance. By the latter, a conquest has been made over, not the imaginations, but the solid and well-grounded fears of guilt. By the one, or through means of a divine incarnation, we are told of the Deity embodied; and thus the love of God has been made the subject, as it were, of ocular demonstration. By the other, or through means of a divine Sacrifice, we are told of the Deity propitiated; and thus the love of God has been made to shine forth, in midst of the law's sustained and vindicated honours. It is this conjunction of mercy with truth and righteousness; it is this harmony of all the divine attributes in the scheme of reconciliation; it is this skilful congruity established in the gospel, between the salvation of the sinner and the authority as well as justice of the Sovereign—which so adapts the mediatorial economy under which we sit, to all the wants and exigencies of our fallen nature. A naked proclamation of mercy could not have set the conscience at rest, could never have effectually hushed those perpetual misgivings wherewith the heart of the sinner is haunted,—who, by the very constitution of his moral nature, must, when he does think of God, think and tremble before him as a God of justice. This it is which letteth; and, ere peace and confidence can be fully or firmly restored to the sinner's distempered bosom, that which letteth must be taken out of the way. And it has been taken out of the way—for now nailed to the cross of Christ. In this glorious spectacle do we see the mystery resolved; and the compassion of the parent meeting

in fullest harmony, with the now asserted, the now vindicated prerogatives of the lawgiver. We there behold justice satisfied and mercy made sure. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a halo of all the attributes; and yet the pre-eminent manifestation there is of God as love—for it is love, not only rejoicing over all the works, but shrined in full consent while shedding enhanced lustre amidst all the perfections of the divine nature.

And here it should be especially noticed, that the atonement made for the sins of the world, though its direct and primary object be to vindicate the truth and justice of the Godhead—instead of casting obscuration over His love, only gives more emphatic demonstration of it. For instead of love, simple, and spontaneous, and finding its unimpeded way, without obstruction and without difficulty to the happiness of its objects—it was a love, which, ere it could reach the guilty millions whom it longed after, had to face the barrier of a moral necessity, that to all but infinite strength and infinite wisdom was insuperable. It was a love which had to force aside the mountain of those iniquities that separated us from God. The high and holy characteristics of a Being who is unchangeable stood in its way; and the mystery which angels desired to look unto, was how the King Eternal who sitteth on heaven's throne could at once be a just God and a Saviour. The love of God, in conflict with such an obstacle and triumphing over it, is a higher exhibition of the attribute, than all the love which radiates from His throne on the sinless families of the unfallen.

And then we are taught, that, for the achievement of this mighty deliverance, not only had the Captain of our salvation to travel in the greatness of His strength, but to sustain a deep and dreadful endurance. The redemption of mankind was wrought out, in the midst of agonies and cries and all the symptoms of a sore and bitter humiliation. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; on Him the chastisement of our peace was laid; and when bowing down His head unto the sacrifice, He had to bear the full burden of a world's expiation. The affirmation that God loveth the world is inconceivably heightened in significancy and strength of evidence, to him who owns the authority of Scripture, and has treasured up these sayings—that God *so* loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; or, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; or, that herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent His Son into the world, to be the propitiation for our sins. There is a moral, a depth and intensity of meaning, a richness of sentiment that the Bible calls unsearchable, in the cross of Christ. It tells a sinful world that God is righteousness; and it as clearly and emphatically tells us that God is love.

But, for the purpose of making this doctrine available to ourselves personally, we must view the love of God, not as a vague and inapplicable generality, but as specially directed, nay actually proffered, and that pointedly and individually to each of us. It is not sufficiently adverted to by

inquirers, nor sufficiently urged by ministers, that the constitution of the gospel warrants this appropriation of its blessings by each man for himself. This all-important truth, so apt to be lost sight of in lax and hazy speculation, may be elicited from the very terms in which the gospel is propounded to us, from the very phraseology in which its overtures are couched. It is a message of good news unto *all people*—to me therefore as one of the people, for where is the scripture which tells that I am an outcast? Christ is set forth as a propitiation for the sins of the *world;* and God so loved the *world* as to send His Son into it. Let me therefore, who beyond all doubt am in the world, take the comfort of these gracious promulgations—for it is only if out of the world, or away from the world, that they do not belong to me. The delusive imagination in the hearts of many, and by which the gospel is with them bereft of all significancy and effect, is, that they cannot take any general announcement or general invitation that is therein to themselves, unless in virtue of some certain mark or certain designation, by which they are specially included in it. Now, in real truth, it is all the other way. It would require a certain mark, or certain designation, specially to exclude them; and without some such mark which might expressly signalize them, they should not refuse a part in the announcements or invitations of the gospel. If the gospel have made no exception of them, they either misunderstand that gospel, or by their unbelief make the author of it a liar, if they except themselves. They demand a particular warrant, for believing that

they are comprehended within the limits of the gospel call to reconciliation with God. Now the call is universal; and it would rather need a particular warrant, to justify their own dark and distrustful imagination of being without its limits. When in the spirit of a perverse or obstinate melancholy, they ask their Christian minister—what is the ground on which he would bid them in to the household of God's reconciled family?—well may he ask, what is the ground on which they would keep themselves out? He stands on a triumphant vantage-footing for his own vindication. His commission is to preach the gospel to *every* creature under heaven, and that takes them in—or to say that *whosoever* cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out, and that takes them in—or behold I stand at the door and knock, if *any* man will open I shall enter into friendship and peace with him, that also takes them in—or look unto me *all* ye ends of the earth and be saved; there is no outcast spoken of here, and that too takes them in—or, *every* man who asketh receiveth; and surely, if language have a meaning, that takes them in—or Christ came into the world to save *sinners;* and, unless they deny themselves to be sinners, that takes them in. In a word, although they may cast themselves out, the primary overtures of the gospel recognise no outcast. They are not forbidden by God—they are only forbidden by themselves. There is no straitening with Him. The straitening is only in their own narrow and suspicious and ungenerous bosoms. It is true they may abide in spiritual darkness if they will—even as a man can, at his own pleasure, immure himself in a

dungeon, or obstinately shut his eyes. Still it holds good notwithstanding, that the light of the Sun in the Firmament is not more open to all eyes, than the light of the Sun of Righteousness is for the rejoicing of the spirits of all flesh. The blessings of the gospel are as accessible to all who will, as are the water or the air or any of the cheap and common bounties of nature. The element of Heaven's love is in as universal diffusion among the dwelling-places of men, as is the atmosphere they breathe in. It solicits admittance at every door; and the ignorance or unbelief of man are the only obstacles which it has to struggle with. It is commensurate with the species; and may be tendered, urgently and honestly tendered, to each individual of the human family.

III. Let us now suppose, in any instance, that to the tender on the one side there is an acceptance upon the other; that God is taken at His word; and, instead of being regarded with jealousy or terror as a distant and inaccessible lawgiver, that He is beheld as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ our Lord; that the dark and before impenetrable vail, which hitherto had mantled the benign aspect of the divinity is withdrawn; that the mercy-seat is seen in Heaven, not the less to be relied on in its being mercy met with truth; that disclosure is made of the love with its smiles of welcome which beams and beckons there, not the less but the more to be trusted and rejoiced in, that it is a love in full conjunction with righteousness—a love consecrated with the blood of an everlasting covenant,

and shrined conspicuous and triumphant amid the honours of a vindicated law. Only imagine a translation of this sort, a translation truly out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and do you not perceive, that, with the light of the gospel in the mind, the love of the gospel in the heart will follow in its train? and that the love of goodwill in God, when once seen and recognised by us, will surely draw our love of gratitude back again? If we had but the perception, the emotion would come unbidden, or, in the words of the apostle, if we knew and believed the love which God hath to us, we should love God because He first loved us.

And here we may understand the regenerating power of Faith. One of its functions is to justify. But its higher and greater function is to sanctify men. Let but the cold obstruction of unbelief be removed; and from that moment, the emancipated heart, as if by the operation of a charm, will beat freely and willingly in love to God, and love for all His services. This new faith were the turning-point of a new character; and in the difference between God viewed as an object of terror, and God viewed us an object of confidence—on that single difference, a complete moral revolution is suspended. Let me be made to know and to believe that God loves me; and, by a law of my mental constitution, I shall be made to love Him back again. The intellectual precedes the moral change. It is doctrine, an article of doctrine, not in the place which it occupies as the dogma of a theological system, but as actually seated in the

heart and the article there of a substantial and living creed—it is this which subdues the whole man into a new creature. The executive power of working this great transformation lies in the truth. In other words, let the faith of the gospel enter the breast of any individual, and it will renovate the man. Let the faith be universal, and we shall have a renovated world.

We might here indulge in the brilliant perspective of a regenerated species, and that through the practicable stepping-stone of a declared gospel—seeing that if its doctrine of God loving the world were as generally accepted as it might be heralded through all our pulpits, a nation would be born in a day. But let us rather at present urge a lesson, which each of you might carry personally and practically home; and tell how it is, that one might animate his own heart with the love of God, and keep this sacred affection glowing there. It is not to be summoned into being or activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effort, that you can bid it into operation within you. You can say to the hand, do this, and it doeth. But we have no such mastery over the intractable heart—nor can any of its movements be thus subjected to a volition or to a voice. We cannot, by a mere inward and undirected plunge among the recesses of our mental constitution, conjure up any of the emotions at our pleasure. The true way of bidding an emotion into being, is to bid into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up resentment in my heart, let me think of the injury which provokes it—or to be moved with

compassion, let me dwell, whether by recollection or fancy, on some picture of wretchedness—or to be regaled with a sense of beauty, let me look objectively and out of myself on the glories of a summer landscape—or to stir up within me a grateful affection, let me call to remembrance some friendly demonstration of a kind and trusty benefactor—or to rekindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let God's love to me be the theme of my believing meditations. I shall never evoke this affection by looking inwardly upon myself; but by looking upwardly to the gospel manifestations of the divine character, I may bring it down from the sanctuary that is above me. In other words it is the faith which elicits and calls out the feeling; and thus both the lessons of the Bible, and the findings of the experimental Christian, are at one with the strict philosophy of the process —when they attest that the way to keep our hearts in the love of God, is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith.

SERMON XI.

FEAR OF TERROR AND FEAR OF REVERENCE.

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."—
1 PETER i. 17.

IN the high and hidden walk of Christian experience, there are mental processes, of which the world at large does not know, and cannot sympathize with. There are even certain apparent contrarieties of feeling, that are fitted to perplex those who never realized them—just because they have never betaken themselves, in good earnest, to the business of their salvation. What more inexplicable for instance, than that a disciple should grow in humility, just as he grows in holiness—that he should have a deeper sense of abasement upon his spirit, just as he should have made a loftier ascent in the path of spiritual excellence—that in proportion as his advancement in virtue is obvious to all other men, in that very proportion he should become the viler in the sight of his own eyes. This however is not so mysterious perhaps, as certain other paradoxes in the life of a gospel pilgrim—which wear an air of more puzzling inconsistency still, to the general understanding. What for example can be made of this finding on the part of the apostle, that when he was weak then he was strong—or that when he gloried in his infirmities,

then he had power to prevail over them—or that when he had no confidence in himself, then he rejoiced the most, and had the greatest success in the whole work and warfare of obedience. This mingling of incompatibilities in the heart and history of believers, goes to stamp upon them the character of a very peculiar people. It is true, the Bible expressly tells us that they are so, and that the peculiarity lies in their being zealous of good works. But it aggravates the peculiarity yet more, when we behold these same people having the utmost zeal for the performance of good works, and yet the utmost zeal against placing their reliance on them; the most accomplished in all the graces of personal righteousness, and yet the least confident of its effect in purchasing for them the rewards of Eternity; the most eminent of all their fellows in the virtues of society as well as in the virtues of sacredness, yet the most forward to disclaim them as articles of merit by which they have earned a sufficient title to the glories and the enjoyments of Heaven. If Christianity be true, there must be a solution for all these difficulties; a clue by which to guide our way, through the intricacies both of Christian doctrine and of Christian experience; a light, that, to every honest and patient inquirer, must at length be struck out between the truths of Scripture and the trials of his own heart —and in quest of which, each of us should betake himself to a more diligent study than before of the Bible, to a more busy process than before of moral and spiritual cultivation.

The reason why the verse before us has sug-

gested these general observations, is because that in regard to the affection which it enjoins, the Scripture hath offered to us another of its seeming contrarieties. We are in one place led by the apostle to regard it as the privilege of Christians, that God had not given them the spirit of fear—and yet it is the prayer of the same apostle in behalf both of himself and of his fellow Christians, that they might have grace whereby to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. We are taught by another apostle to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear. Whereas Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, rejoices in it as a privilege of the new dispensation, that under it we should serve God without fear. The apostle Paul tells us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and yet the apostle John says that perfect love casteth out fear, and he that feareth is not perfect. We hope by a further attention to this subject—not merely to vindicate the wisdom and consistency of the Bible in regard to it—but through the divine blessing, so to unfold certain processes in the work of sanctification, as might serve in some degree for the practical guidance of those who now hear us.

It may happen from the poverty of human language, that the same term should be employed to express two affections, which, although they possess a common resemblance, have also such distinct modifications as really to differ and that considerably from each other. Nay, so wide may be the difference between them, that while it is the privilege of Christians to be exempted from the

one, it is their duty to cherish the other to the uttermost. This may give rise to at least a verbal inconsistency between many passages of the Bible —which when cleared away not only delivers this book from a charge which might be alleged against it, but may also elicit an impressive argument in its favour, by manifesting its delicate adaptations to the peculiarities of our chequered and complex Nature.

In the prosecution of this discourse, we shall only remark on that fear whereof God is the object—and not on that fear which is excited in the heart of an earnest and desirous Christian, by the consideration of those hazards to which his final salvation is exposed.

There is a fear towards God that might be denominated the fear of terror. It is the affection of one who is afraid of Him. There is in it the alarm of selfishness. God is regarded as in a state of displeasure, and as afterwards to wreak that displeasure on the person of him who is the object of it. There is in this fear a dread of God's vengeance. It is at all times connected with a view of one's own personal suffering; and the dire imagery of pain, and tribulation, and perhaps endless and irreversible wretchedness, is perhaps that which chiefly gives dismay and disturbance to his soul. There is an impression of wrath in the breast of an incensed Deity against him; but there is furthermore the prospect of some fell and fearful infliction from His uplifted hand. The fear of the sinner is not lest God should be displeased—for

were it only to stop here, he should feel no care and have no disquietude about the matter. But the fear is, lest himself should be destroyed. It is altogether an affection of absorbed and concentrated selfishness. It terminates upon his own person. It is not in the least a moral, but entirely an animal feeling—the same with that, in virtue of which any inferior creature would struggle back from the precipice over which it was to be cast; or eye with trembling recoil the weapon that was brandished for its extermination. Such is the fear of terror. It carries in it no homage to the sacredness of the Divinity—yet is aggravated by a sense of that sacredness, because then God, regarded as a God of unappeasable jealousy, is deemed to be intolerant of all evil; and the guilt-stricken soul, in looking upward to the holiness of the lawgiver, looks forward to its own destruction in that hideous and everlasting hell, where the transgressors of the law find their doom and their landing-place.

Now it is obvious, that, while haunted by a fear of this sort, there can be no free or willing or generous obedience. There might be a service of drudgery, but not a service of delight—such obedience as is extorted from a slave by the whip of his overseer—but not a free-will offering of love or of loyalty. It makes all the difference between a slavish and a spontaneous obedience—the one rendered in the oldness of the letter, the other in the newness of the spirit—the one brought about by compulsion of the hand, the other by consent of the heart. And yet, how shall this translation be effected from the spirit of bondage to that of liberty?

How shall we get quit of that overwhelming terror, wherewith it is impossible that either affection or confidence can dwell?—and which so long therefore as it subsists, must cause the religion of a man upon earth, to be wholly dissimilar from that of an angel in Heaven? For this purpose, and to appease the terror of our own spirits, shall we shut our eyes to what is really terrible in the character of God? Shall we view Him otherwise than as a God of holiness? Shall we dismantle His character of its justice, and righteousness, and truth? Shall we conceive of Him as descending to a compromise with sin, and as relenting in aught from His hatred and hostility against it? To soften the Divinity into an object of our possible tenderness and trust, shall we strip Him of all His moral attributes but one; and, in the midst of this wild and wasteful anarchy, shall mercy abide as the only surviving perfection of that God whom we deemed to be unchangeable? O, we fear, that the constitution of the Godhead cannot be so tampered with; and that the principles of His everlasting government can never be set aside, nor make way to suit the wishes or the convenience of sinful man. And the question remains, how shall man ever be divested of that terror which is inspired by the sense of an angry God; and which at the same time strikes an impotency upon all the efforts of Nature to love God, or to impregnate with a right spirit any part of the obedience which it renders to Him?

It is reserved for the gospel of Jesus Christ to do away this terror from the heart of man, and yet to leave untarnished the holiness of God. It is the

atonement that was made by Him which resolves this mystery—providing at once for the deliverance of the sinner, and for the dignity of the Sovereign. That wrath, which had else been poured forth upon the guilty, has all been discharged upon the head of their accepted Substitute; and He, in bowing Himself down unto the sacrifice, has both established in full authority the law, and purchased full indemnity for those who had put that authority to scorn. This is that great transaction, by which the broken fellowship of earth and Heaven is readjusted; and through this as a free and open medium of communication, can God rejoice as before in all kindness over man, and man again place his rejoicing confidence in God. On doing so, he is disburdened from the terror that had enslaved him, and that had given the spirit of a crouching pusillanimity to all his obedience. He from this moment enters into liberty. He is no longer haunted by degrading apprehensions about self and about safety. He sees God to be at peace with him, but in such a way as to enhance the sacredness of His now vindicated character; and in the very act of receiving his forgiveness through the hand of a Mediator, he beholds, throughout the whole of the august ceremonial, the heightened lustre that is thrown over the truth and the justice and the majesty of the Godhead.

But while this view of God in Christ extinguishes one fear—the fear of terror; it awakens another and an altogether distinct fear—the fear of reverence. God is no longer regarded as the enemy of the sinner; but in the cross of the Redeemer,

where this enmity was slain, there is full demonstration of a moral nature that is in utter repugnancy to sin. He does not appear against us in the aspect of a Judge; nor do we hear from His lips the voice of condemnation for sins that are past. But still there is distinctly heard from the mercy-seat the voice of a Father, who, along with the utterance of our pardon, bids us go and sin no more. Now that we have entered into reconciliation, we hear not the upbraidings of the lawgiver, for the despite which in former days we have done unto His will. But the office of the gospel is to regenerate as well as reconcile; and every disciple who embraces it is met with the saying—"This is the will of God even your sanctification." The truth is, that, having found out a way by which to ward off the vengeance of sin from your persons —it is the intent and object of this His new administration to root out its existence from your hearts. With the sinner He has entered into a league of amity; but against sin, and all its serpent brood of abominations, He carries on the same unsparing and implacable warfare as before. Among all the myriads of the redeemed, there is not one individual the guilt of whose sins has been pardoned, the power and the being of whose sins shall not be utterly destroyed. Within the entire compass of our Redeemer's kingdom, not one subject to the end of time ever shall be found, who, ransomed from the condemnation of sin, has not been reclaimed from sin unto Holiness. The great and ultimate design of that new economy under which we sit, is to restore and to perfect in fallen man the lost

virtues of the Godhead; and we only conform to this economy, when, after having accepted of its offered forgiveness and so entered into peace, we look unto the venerable image of Him to whom we have been brought nigh, that brightening unto His resemblance every day, we may at length attain to His character and be filled with His fullness.

It will now be understood of all those who have been translated into this new economy, or, to use the language of the apostle, whom God hath translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, it will be understood what the fear is which they are relieved from, and what the fear is which they retain—or how they, conformably to one passage of the New Testament, can serve God without fear; and at the same time, comformably to another passage, can serve Him with reverence and with godly fear. The one is that fear which hath torment, and which perfect love casteth out. The other is that in which the early churches are said to have walked, at the time when they had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. The one is that which belongs to those fearful and unbelieving, of whom it is said that they shall have part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. The other is that which belongs to those of whom it is said, that the mercy of the Lord is unto them who fear Him. Such is the difference of estimation in which these two affections are held; and such the difference, in point of treatment, which they severally shall experience. And it does

vindicate the wisdom or discrimination of Scripture, it does mark an intelligent view both of our nature and of the bearings which the evangelical system of revelation has upon it, when it appears, that, confounded though they be under one denomination, there is a like difference in the properties and characteristics of each of them. The one, as we said before, is the fear of terror. The other is the fear of reverence. When under the one, we are looking unto self; and the apprehension is, lest a creature so sentient should be agonised by sufferings that are to come. When under the other, we are looking unto God; and the apprehension is, lest a Being so sacred should look with distaste and dissatisfaction towards us because of our present remaining sinfulness. When the one is awakened by a sense of God's displeasure, it is because of the vengeance which follows in its train. To the other there is a moral force in the displeasure, although there should be no vengeance. To conceive the distinction, might we imagine an earthly superior, whom we hold in reverence both for his rank and for his virtues. It might be a reverence wholly unaccompanied with terror. It might be a fear into which there enters no apprehension whatever of pains or of penalties. The loss simply of his good opinion were enough to awaken it—although there should be no physical loss or physical suffering incurred by it. A mere look of disapprobation from him, of whose respectability and worth we had the high imagination, like the look of Christ upon Peter, would, of itself, be felt to agonise all the better sensibilities of our nature.

It is not even necessary for this, that we should incur his displeasure by a violation of his legal rights. It were simply enough to have incurred his disesteem by a violation of moral rightness. It is not necessary that he should be offended with us, because we have robbed him of his dues. It were enough that he thought of us unfavourably, because we had fallen short of our own duties. Even though we had nothing to fear from his anger, still we should fear his disapprobation. A mere adverse judgment, although not followed up by any execution, would in itself be grievous to us. And such is the feeling of a Christian towards God. He stands not in the terror of any vengeance from His hands—yet he would feel an awe in the rebuke of His countenance. He trembles not under the uplifted arm of an injured Deity. Yet the disapproval of His omniscient eye, would in itself be dreadful to him. He is not frightened at the thought of any coming penalties—yet he is solemnized by the notice that God takes of him. In other words, the fear of terror is done away, but the fear of reverence survives it. A sense of God's mercy, as exhibited in the work of our redemption, has expelled the one. A sense of His holiness, also exhibited there, has enhanced and perpetuated the other. The two fears are distinct and dissimilar to the uttermost. The one is an animal—the other is a moral affection. The one, the fear of terror, will descend with the accursed into Hell, and have fulfilment there in the cries and agonies of the place of torment. The other, the fear of reverence, will be borne upward by the redeemed into Heaven,

and will there pour a deeper and a graver melody into the adorations that compass the throne of the Eternal. Let us cease to wonder then, that the disciples of the New Testament are called upon to banish from their hearts the first affection, and to retain the second—that in one place, they should be reproached because of their fearfulness; and, in another, should be admonished to live all their days in the fear of God. The faith of the gospel harmonizes both these sentiments. It displaces terror. It heightens reverence.

This, so far from an unintelligible mystery, is exemplified in one of the most frequent and familiar relations of human life. Let the wife, says the apostle Paul, reverence her husband; but, while in subjection to him, says the apostle Peter, let her not be afraid with any amazement—or, as it means, with any terror or consternation. If ever you esteemed a man from whom you had nothing personally to fear—if ever the presence of a superior drew an homage of profoundest deference from your bosom, although you had nought of harm and nought of hostility to apprehend from him—if you have ever known what it was to have an awe cast upon your spirits, when the dignity, whether of virtuous or of intellectual greatness, stood before you, even though it beamed in placidness upon yourself—then you have had experimental proof in your own feelings of the distinction that we now labour to impress; and you have found how possible it is to be utterly free of all terror towards God, and yet to hold Him in deepest reverence.

Such is the wide difference between these two

affections; and, corresponding to this, there is a difference equally wide between the legal and the evangelical dispensations. Under the former economy, the alternative to do this and live, is, that if you fail in doing this, you will perish everlastingly. Now let this be the great stimulus to the performance of virtue; and then think of the spirit and of the inward character, wherewith they are impregnated. It is in fact a character of the most intense selfishness. It is the fear of terror which goads him on to all his obedience, and compels him to act religiously—to walk the servile round of many outward conformities, and forcibly to refrain his hands from all outward and literal transgression. For such a religion as this, it is not needed, that he should have any capacity of moral principle. It is enough if he have the capacity of animal pain. He is driven along, not by the feelings of his spiritual, but by those of his sentient nature; and, instead of liberal or spontaneous piety, we behold, in the multitude of his operose but unwilling drudgeries, all the baseness of a sordid and superstitious devoteeship. That obedience which is given with a view to purchase, either the enjoyments of Heaven or exemption from the agonies of hell, may evince a taste for happiness; but this is altogether distinct from a taste for holiness—or it may evince a distaste for suffering, but this is not a distaste for sin. It is thus that we hold the legal economy to be not more adverse to the comfort, than it is to the character of man. It taints and vitiates the morality which it professes to idolize. It puts the alloy of an ignoble quality into all its services. Its constant

demand is for virtue—on which however it inflicts the utmost degradation—causing principle to sink into prudence; and transforming him who might else have been a generous aspirant after the excellence that is godlike, into a morose and mercenary hireling.—So that, instead of loving righteousness for itself, or of hating iniquity for itself, he wretchedly drivels at the services of the one, and only for the promised reward; and represses his desires towards the other, only because of the threatened vengeance.

Now it is not so with the economy of the gospel. The gate of Heaven is thrown open at the outset to its disciples; and they are invited with confident step to walk towards it. God holds Himself forth not as a Judge who reckons, but as a Father who is reconciled to them. A deed of remission for the sins that are past is put into their hands; and whereas before, they, under a sense of guilt, may have been troubled at the sight of God's offended sacredness, they have now, beneath the covert of an ample and to them freely extended mediatorship, taken their secure refuge from the storm. The fear of terror ought now to have no place in hearts, occupied by a grateful and a rejoicing love, that should cast it away from them; but there is nothing in this transition from Nature to Grace, nothing in this renouncing of our own righteousness and relying on Christ as our alone Saviour, nothing in this change of the legal for the evangelical, that is fitted to extinguish—there is every thing to enhance within us the fear of reverence. When God is seen by us in the face of Christ, He is seen in

the brightness of His mercy to the sinful; but it is a mercy so accompanied with holiness and truth, so enshrined as it it were in the high honours of a vindicated law, as to throw over the character of the Godhead a deeper sacredness than before. In that halo which is over the mercy-seat of Christianity, there is a radiance of all the attributes. Along with the love which gladdens every believer's heart, there is an august and awful majesty to solemnize it, and while in this wondrous spectacle, we behold peace to the sinner—yet, seen as it is through the mystery of a world's atonement, we there too behold the evil of sin in most full and appalling demonstration. While the sinner looked upon all this as the fire of Heaven's jealousy, directed against himself, to burn up and fiercely to destroy, there was but room in his heart for the one affection of single and overwhelming terror. But when seen as it is, averted from us because discharged upon Him who for our sake sustained the agonies of the garden and of the cross, he can look on without the fear of terror—yet it is impossible to look intelligently on, without the fear of deepest reverence. It is a like difference with that which obtains between the sight of a volcano from a place of exposure, and from a place of safety. In the one there are the emotions of an absorbing terror, in a mind occupied with self. In the other there are the emotions of an admiring taste, in a mind occupied with the scene of contemplation. But for the full enjoyment of this scene, a degree of conscious security is indispensable. A sense of danger would disturb, and despair would utterly

destroy it; and not without a certain belief of personal safety, would the fine sensibilities of taste have their play in the spectator's bosom. His soul must be in a state of repose, ere it can reflect those characters of grandeur or of gracefulness which lie on the panorama before it; nor could it take on a true impression of its varied imagery, if ruffled by apprehension, or, still more, if tempest-driven among the hazards of the fiery torrent and of the earthquake. There would be one engrossing sensibility that dispossessed all others; and, till it was hushed by a sense of protection and of safety, neither the graces nor the sublimities of a perspective so marvellous could have any charm for his imagination—alike insensible to the gorgeousness that blazed upon the mountain-top, or to the verdant beauty that smiled around its base.

It is just so in reference to God—more terrible as He is to the sinner's eye, than the fiercest and most menacing volcano, when viewed only in the light of an incensed lawgiver. The sinner is at that time otherwise employed, than in an admiring survey of the beauty or the nobleness of the Divine character. His great concern is about himself. His overwhelming anxiety is about his own prospects. He has not time, or at least he has not tranquillity, among the agitations of a perturbed spirit, for what may be called a contemplative study of the Godhead. And as in our case of illustration, all the tasteful sensibilities were in abeyance, while death and destruction were conceived to be at hand—so all the moral sensibilities towards God are equally in abeyance, when the mind is engross-

ed with the dread of His vengeance, or looks onward to that frightful eternity which is in reserve for the children of ungodliness.

It is by the gospel of Jesus Christ, and by it alone, that this check on the moral sensibilities of our heart towards God is removed. It assures safety and peace to the sinner; and he, looking to the atonement of the cross, can at once rejoice in the fulness of the divine mercy, and do profoundest reverence to the unabated dignity of the Sovereign. The grace and the greatness of the Divinity are alike open to his view; and whereas before, the terrors of a guilty selfishness had within him their sole occupation, rescued from these, he can now look calmly and intelligently on; and it is when so employed, that the susceptibilities of his moral nature are awakened to one and all of the perfections of the Godhead. It is when he thus looks unto God, that he becomes like unto God—even by the moral radiance of Him who is adored, now calling back a kindred reflection from the serene and steadfast countenance of him who is the adorer. It is thus that that assimilating process which shall be perfected in Heaven, where we shall be altogether like unto God, for there we shall see Him as He is, has its commencement and its progress upon earth—for even now, beholding as with open face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord.

Let us now conclude this part of our argument with two practical reflections.

First, we doubt that there may be some here

present, who are alike strangers both to the one fear and the other—as little struck by the terror of God's wrath, as they are solemnized into reverence by the worth and the moral excellence which belong to Him. This we hold to be the general habit of men in the world. They stand in no need of a gospel to soothe them, and just because the law never scared them. They are listless, in truth, and most profoundly asleep to both terms of this big alternative; and, if not animated into hope by any sense of reality in the offers of mercy, neither can they sink into despondency by any sense of reality in the coming vengeance. The present existence is their all; and as to its issues in a yet unknown and untravelled scene, they think not at all and they care not at all. The Bible declaration that by nature they are the children of wrath, does not move them. The testimony of their own conscience that they are living without God in the world, does not awaken them. The daily remembrancers which meet them on their way, and speak to them with a force of animation which there is no evading, of the death that is so surely and so speedily awaiting them, carry not forward their thoughts to the judgment that is also awaiting them. Meanwhile time runs on with unaltered footsteps; and the cycles of Heaven, as they roll over-head, witness the follies and the heedlessness of each successive day, to be as inveterate as of the day that went before it; and not more steadfastly than these perform their wonted revolutions in the firmament above, does many a poor child of infatuation below persist in the courses of a deep and deter-

mined worldliness. And so with thousands and thousands more, there is never so much as one fearful anticipation in time, of that which has its dread fulfilment in eternity. For God is not to be mocked. The unchanging principles of His moral administration are not to be tampered with. The sanctions of His outraged law are not to be nullified, but must have their emphatic vindication —for sooner shall nature expire than the high jurisprudence of God shall be trampled on— Heaven and Earth shall pass away but not one jot or one tittle of His law shall fail.

Secondly—Let us hope that there are some here present, who have known what it was to be practically in earnest because of these things; and who feeling a significancy both in the threats of that law which they have violated, and in the invitations of that gospel which has held out to them a sanctuary and a hiding-place from the storm, have there cast the anchor of their hope, and now rejoice that they are safe. Theirs is in no way the joy of those who feel that they can sin with impunity. It is true that they count upon forgiveness, but not forgiveness in such a way as marks the indifference of the Godhead to sin, but forgiveness in such a way as manifests His entire and unbroken sacredness. In that atonement by which the vengeance of a broken law has been averted from themselves, they still behold the demonstration of God's antipathy to evil; and if not actuated as heretofore by the terror of His power, still they are actuated by the deepest reverence for the perfections of His moral nature. They are not ex-

empted from service under the economy of the gospel. Only it is service, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit. Still it is service; and it should be no longer a mystery, that they, who, in one sense of the term are called upon to serve God without fear, are, in another sense of it, called upon to perfect their holiness in the fear of the Lord. You will perceive by this, how much more pure and generous and noble, the evangelical is than the legal virtue—the one in fact being rendered, in truckling exchange for the remuneration which it aims after; the other, already in possession of that ample remuneration which has been won by the Mediator for all who believe, rendered as a spontaneous offering of love and of loyalty. It is thus that faith, of all principles the most maligned and misunderstood by the world, not only pacifies the conscience of the sinner, but purifies all the springs of his obedience—so that, instead of a drivelling servility towards the Master of whom he is in dread, it is the willing homage of his duteous and delighted subordination towards the Father whom he holds in utmost reverence.

SERMON XII.

IMMORTALITY BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY THE GOSPEL.

"Who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."—2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

THE men of the earth carry on their designs and their doings, just as if on earth they were to live for ever. Each is so intent upon his own earthly object—every mind is so occupied with its own earthly scheme—every countenance speaks such deep and eager anxiety after some favourite yet earthly ambition—each individual is so decidedly embarked, with all his powers of attention and perseverance, on some earthly undertaking—That surely one might think, it can be nought of a trifling or temporary nature, which either creates or keeps up so mighty a stir among our species. And yet it is not the less true, that all the busy activities of all these people have their upshot in forgetfulness. It is not the greatness or the durability of the objects, which has called forth the effort and the strenuousness of men. It is the folly of men, which urges them to the pursuit of paltry and evanescent objects—a folly which overlooks the arithmetic of our few little years, and has invested time with the characters of eternity—a folly which all the demonstrations of experience have been unable to rectify; and which, after the mighty sweep of countless generations

from the face of our world, reigns with unabated strength over the human heart, and finds the men of the present day as unwise and as infatuated as ever.

Death is a theme of mighty import; and every variety of eloquence has been exhausted, upon the magnitude of its desolations. There is not a place where human beings congregate together, that does not, in the fleeting history of its inmates, give forth the lesson of their mortality. Is it a house? Death enters unceremoniously there, and with rude hand tears asunder the dearest of our sympathies. Is it a town? Every year death breaks up its families; and the society of our early days is fast melting away from us. Is it a market place? Death works among the people at short and rapid intervals; and though at the end of twenty years, I see a crowd as busy and as numerous as before—these are new faces which meet my eye, and new names which fall upon my ear. Is it a church? The aspect of the congregation is changing perpetually; and in a little time another people will enter these walls, and another minister will speak to them. Is it the country at large? On every side we see a shifting population—another set of occupiers to the farms, and other names or other men annexed to the properties.

But this is viewing the subject at a distance. Every assemblage of objects is composed of individuals; and think of the numbers that must have suffered, to accomplish the changes which we have now set before you. Think that each of these individuals carried in his bosom a living principle, and that that principle is now to all appearance

extinguished—that each felt as warm and as alive to the world as perhaps any who now hears me, and that this world the stern severity of death forced him to abandon for ever—that each was as feelingly open to pain and to terror, and that the forebodings and the reluctance and the agonies of death came upon all of them—that each had hopes and plans and wishes to accomplish, but that death carried him away; and they are all buried in forgetfulness along with him.

All is vanity says the preacher; and it is death which stamps this character on the affairs of the world. It throws a mockery upon all that is human. It frustrates the wisest plans, and absolutely converts them into nothingness. All the ecstasies of pleasure, all the splendours of fame, all the triumphs of ambition, all the joys of domestic tenderness, all that the eye can look for or the heart aspire after—this, this is their affecting termination. Death absorbs all—it annihilates all. Our fathers who strutted their little hour on this very theatre, were as active and as noisy as we. The loud laugh of festivity was heard in their dwellings; and in the busy occupation of their callings, they had their days of labour, and their nights of thoughtful anxiety. The world carried on it then the same face of activity as now; and, where are the men who kept it up in their allotted generation? They are where we shall soon follow them. They have gone to sleep; but it is the sleep of death. Their bed is a coffin in which they are mouldering. The garment which they have thrown aside is their body, which served them through life; but is now lying

in loose and scattered fragments, among the earth of their grave.

And it does aggravate our hopelessness of escape from death, when we look to the wide extent and universality of its ravages. We see no exception. It scatters its desolations with unsparing cruelty, among all the sons and daughters of Adam. It perhaps adds to our despair, when we see it extending to the other animals. Every thing that has life dies; and even the lovely forms of the vegetable creation dissolve into nothing. It appears to be the condition of every organic being; and so looks as if it were some tremendous necessity, under which we have nothing for it but helplessly to acquiesce. It carries to our observation all the immutability of a general law. Man can look for no mitigation to the big and incurable distress. He cannot reverse the processes of Nature, nor bid her mighty elements obey him.

Is there no power then superior to Nature, and which can control her? To us a law of the universe carries the idea of some fixed and inalienable necessity along with it; and none more certain, more unvarying and more widely extended in its operation, than the law of death. In the wide circuit of things, does there exist no high authority which can abolish this law?—no power which can overthrow death, and spoil him of his principality?—no being travelling in the greatness of his strength, who can grapple this mighty monarch, and break his tyranny to pieces? We never saw that Being. But the records of past ages have come down to us; and we there read of an extraordinary

visitor who lighted on these realms, where death has reigned so long in all the triumphs of undivided empire. Wonderful enterprise, He came to destroy death. Vast undertaking, He came to depose Nature from her conceived immutability. He came to shift her processes—and a law that embraced in its wide grasp all which lives and moves on the face of the world, he came to overturn it. And He soon gave tokens of a power commensurate to the mighty undertaking. That Nature, to whose operations, we are so apt to ascribe some stubborn and invincible necessity, gave way at His coming. She felt His authority through all her elements, and she obeyed it. Wonderful period, when the constancy of Nature was broke in upon by Him who established it—when the Deity vindicated His honours; and the miracles of a single age, committed to authentic history, gave evidence to all futurity that there is a Power above Nature and beyond it. What more unchanging than the aspect of the starry Heavens; in what quarter of her dominions does Nature maintain a more silent and solemn inflexibility, than in the orbs which roll around us? Yet at the coming of the mighty Saviour, these Heavens broke silence. Music was heard from their canopy, and it came from a concord of living voices, which sung the praises of God, and made them fall in articulate language upon human ears. After this, who can call Nature unalterable? Jesus Christ while He tarried upon earth made perpetual invasions upon her constancy; and she never in a single instance, resisted the word of His power. What manner of man is this, said his disciples, who can make

the wind and the seas obey him? Philosophers love to expatiate; and they tell us of the laws of the animal and the vegetable kingdom. These laws may prove an impassable barrier to us. But in the hand of the omnipotent Saviour they were nothing. He reversed or suspended them at pleasure. He blasted the fig tree by a single word; and, what to us was the dawn of some high anticipation, He made man the subject of His miracles. He restored sight to the blind. He restored speech to the dumb. He restored motion to the palsied. And to crown His triumph over Nature and her processes, He restored life to the dead. He laid down His own life, and He took it up again. The disciples gave up all for lost, when they saw the champion of their hopes made the victim of that very mortality, which He promised to destroy. It was like the revenge and the victory of Nature, over Him who had so often prevailed against her. But it was only to make His triumph more illustrious. He died and was buried; but He rose again. He re-entered that mysterious bourne, from which it has been said that no traveller ever returns; but He did. He burst asunder the mighty barriers of the grave. He re-entered and reanimated that body which expired on the cross; and by that most striking of all testimonies, His own unaltered form emerging from the tomb, He has given us to know, that He fought against the law of death and He carried it.

But man not only wants power to achieve his own immortality, he also wants light to discover it. If such, in spite of every appalling exhibition to the contrary, is really to be the ultimate state of man,

this doctrine is not brought to light by reason. The text indeed says as much, in saying that it is brought to light by the gospel. It represents this great truth as dark by Nature, and only made clear by Revelation. It seems to cast discredit on all the arguments of science in behalf of a future state; and, just for want of a sufficient basis in the evidence of Philosophy on which to rear this noble anticipation, it would rest and establish it chiefly on the evidence of faith.

In the further prosecution of this discourse, let us first advert to what may be called the physical state, and then to the moral state of the mind; and under each head, let us endeavour to contrast the insufficiency of the light of nature, with the sufficiency and fulness of the light of the gospel.

I. An argument for its immortality has been drawn from the consideration of what we should term the physics of the mind—that is, from the consideration of its properties, when it is regarded as having a separate or substantive being of its own. For example it has been said that spirit is not matter, and therefore must be imperishable. We confess that we see not the force of this reasoning. We are not sure by nature of the premises; and neither do we apprehend how the conclusion flows from it. We think ourselves familiar with the subtleties and the scholastics that have been uttered upon the subject. To us they are far from satisfactory; nor can we perceive aught of that evidence, on which we rest our belief in any coming

event or coming state of the futurity which lies before us—we can perceive no such force of practical evidence in those abstract or metaphysic generalities, which are employed to demonstrate the endurance or rather the indestructibleness of the thinking principle—so as to be persuaded, that it shall indeed survive the dissolution of the body, and shall separately maintain its consciousness and its powers on the other side of the grave.

Now, in the recorded fact of our Saviour's resurrection, we see what many would call a more popular; but what we should deem a far more substantial and satisfactory argument for the soul's immortality, than any that is furnished by the speculation which we have now alluded to. To us the one appears as much superior to the other, as History is more solid than Hypothesis, or as Experience is of a texture more firm than Imagination, or as the Philosophy of our modern Bacon, is of a surer and sounder character than the Philosophy of the old schoolmen. Now it is upon the fact of His own resurrection that Christ rests the hope and the promise of resurrection to all of us. If He be not risen from the dead, says one of His apostles, we are of all men the most miserable. It is to this fact, that he appeals as the foundation and the hope of immortality. To every cavil and to every difficulty he opposes the emphatic argument, that Christ has risen. This was Paul's argument; and it has descended by inheritance to us. We have received the testimony. We have access to the documents. We can take a view of the unexampled evidence, which has been carried down to us upon the vehi-

cles of history; and, in opposition to all which fancy or speculation can muster against us, we can appeal to the fact. It is not a doctrine excogitated by the ingenuities of human reasoning. It is a doctrine submitted to the observation of the human senses. It is not an untried experiment. While Jesus Christ lived, He made it repeatedly, and with unvaried success, upon others; and, in giving up His body to the cross, He made it upon Himself. One who could carry an experiment such as this to a successful termination, has a claim to be listened to; and He tells by the mouth of an apostle, that the fact of Himself having risen, bears most decisively upon the doctrine that we shall rise also. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Let it be remarked, before we conclude this head of discourse, that the word which we render "abolished," signifies also "made of no effect." The latter interpretation of the word is certainly more applicable to our first or our temporal death. He has not abolished temporal death. It still reigns with unmitigated violence, and sweeps off its successive generations with as great sureness and rapidity as ever. This part of the sentence is not abolished, but it is rendered ineffectual. Death still lays us in the grave; but it cannot chain us there to everlasting forgetfulness. It puts its cold hand upon every one of us; but a power mightier than death will lift it off, and these frames be again reanimated with all the warmth of life and of sentiment. The church-yard has been called the

land of silence; and silent it is indeed to those who occupy it. The Sabbath bell is no longer heard; nor yet the tread of the living population above them. But though removed from the hearing of every earthly sound, yet shall they hear the sound of the last trumpet. It shall enter the loneliness of their dwellings, and be heard through Death's remotest caverns. When we open the sepulchres of the men of other times, the fragments of skeletons and the mouldering of bones form indeed a humiliating spectacle. But the working of the same power which raised Jesus from the dead, shall raise corruption to a comelier form, and invest it in all the bloom and vigour of immortality. So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption. It is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour. It is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness. It is raised in power. It is sown a natural body. It is raised a spiritual body. This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

II. But another argument for the immortality of man, has been drawn by philosophers from the moral state of his mind; and more especially from that progressive expansion, which they affirm it to have undergone, in respect of its virtues as well as of its powers. Still we fear, that, in respect of this argument too, the flowery description of the

moralists has no proof, and more particularly no experience to support it. There is a beauty we do confess in many of their representations; but beauty is only for them who sit at ease. It is a cruel mockery to the man who is surrounded by the agonies of a death-bed; and has in his immediate view, the dread images of annihilation or vengeance. Yes! we have heard them talk, and with eloquence too, of the good man and of his prospects—of his progress in life being a splendid career of virtue, and of his death being a gentle transition to another and a better world—of its being the goal where he reaps the honourable reward that is due to his accomplishments, or being little more than a step in his proud march to eternity. This is all very fine, but it is the fineness of poetry. Where is the evidence of its being any better than a deceitful imagination? We might believe that there was something real in this stately progression to eternity, if we saw it; but we see it not. Why so cruel an interruption to the progress? What means this awful and mysterious death? Why is the good man not suffered to carry on in his triumphant progress; and how comes this dark and inexplicable event, to be interposed between him and the full accomplishment of his destiny? You may choose to call it a step; but there is no virtue in a name to quell our suspicion. It bears in every circumstance all the marks of a termination. We see the gradual decay of those faculties, which you tell us, but tell us falsely, are ripening and expanding. We see those virtues which you have represented as in a state of constant perseverance

—we see them giving way to the power of disease—we see them withering into feebleness; and, instead of that which confers grace or dignity on man, we see the peevishness, the discontent the fretfulness of age. We see the body bending to the dust. We see it extended in all the agony of helplessness and pain. To call this a triumphant procession to eternity—or to disguise those actual horrors which the ear hears and the eye witnesses, by the gildings of a flimsy imagination! We observe the emission of the last breath; and, whether the spirit is extinguished or fled to another residence, Nature tells us not—but when the academic declaimer talks of his fancied career of perfection, we should lift the honest front of experience against him, and call upon him to reveal to us the mystery of death. How comes an event so unseemly to meet the hero of immortality, on the path he was treading with such security and triumph? What the purpose of such an interruption at all? Why has the being, whom they would proudly assimilate to angels, such an ordeal to undergo? Why like them does he not flourish in perpetual vigour? And how shall we explain that mighty change, with all its affecting accompaniments of reluctance and agony and despair?

Death gives the lie to all the speculations of all the moralists; but it only gives evidence and consistency to the statements of the gospel. The doctrines of the New Testament will bear to be confronted with the rough and vigorous lessons of experience. They attempt no ornament and no palliation. They give the truth in all its severity

—nor do they attempt to strew flowers around the sepulchre, or pour a deceitful perfume into the rottenness of the grave. Were a physician to take up my case, and speak lightly of my ailments, while I knew that a consuming disease was working and making progress within me, I should have no confidence in him, or in his remedies. I should like him to see the mischief in its full extent, that the medicine applied may be such as to meet and to combat with it. Now Christ the Physician of souls has taken up their disease in all its malignity. There is no softening, no disguise, in the representation of His messengers. Their account of death accords with our experience of it. What they tell us of death, is what we feel it to be—not that thing of triumph, which out of Christianity and beyond the circle of its influence it never is; but a thing of distress, and horror, and unnatural violence. He who is weak enough to be carried along by the false and the flimsy eloquence of sentimental moralists, might be led to believe that the man who dies is only sinking gently to repose, or winging his way to a triumphant eternity. But the Bible tells us differently—that out of Christ there is no triumph and no gentleness about it. It talks of the sting, and of the pains, and of the fear of death; and what we feel and know of the shrinkings of nature, proves that it has experience on its side. And the book which characterizes so truly death in itself, is worthy at least of our attention, when it treats of death in its moral or spiritual bearings.

Death then, as it appears to the eye of the senses, is but the extinction of that life which we

now live in the world; but death, as revealed to us in Scripture, is the effect and the sentence of sin. Sin is the root of the mischief; and it is a mischief which Scripture represents as stretching in malignity and duration, far beyond the ken of the senses. Had we no other guide than our senses, we might conceive death to be a mere annihilation; and the utter destruction of their being, to be the whole amount of the calamity inflicted upon sinners. But distinct from this death of the body, there is what may be termed the death of the soul—not a death which consists in the extinction of its consciousness, for the conscience of guilt will keep by it for ever—not a death which implies the cessation of feeling, for to feeling it will continue to be all alive, though the feeling of intense suffering—not a death by which all sense of God will be expunged, for the sense of God's offended countenance will abide by it and agonize it through all eternity. He who undergoes this second, this spiritual death, does not thereby cease to have life; but he ceases to have that favour of God which is better than life. He lives it is true, but it is the life of an exile from hope and from happiness. He lives, but it is in a state of hopeless distance from the fountain of living water. God is at enmity towards him; and in his own heart there is enmity towards God. This at least is the death of enjoyment. It is the death of all those pleasures, and of all those perceptions, which belong to a right moral state of existence. In this sense truly the soul is dead, though alive and most pungently alive to the corrosions of that worm which dieth not. In this

sense there has been a quenching of its life, though all awake to the pain and the anguish of the fire that is not quenched. The temporal death is only the portal to sorer calamities. All who sin shall die; but this is not the conclusion of the sentence. All who die in sin shall live in torment.

Now it promises well for our Saviour's treatment of this sore malady—that He hath as it were placed Himself at the source of the mischief, and there made head against it. He has combated the radical force and virulence of the disease. He has probed it to the bottom. He has grappled with sin in its origin and its principle. He has taken it away—for by the sacrifice of Himself on the accursed tree, He has expiated its guilt; and, by the operation of the Spirit in the heart of the believer, He is rooting out its existence. Had He only put together the fragments of my body, and recalled my soul to its former tenement—He would have done nothing. Sin, both in its power and in its condemnation, would have claimed me as its own—and, in dreary banishment from God, it would have recalled me to life, but a life of misery; and stamped on me immortality, but an immortality of despair. But the Author of the gospel has swept off the whole burden of the calamity. He has made a decisive thrust into the very heart and principle of the disease. He has destroyed sin, for He has both cancelled the sentence and washed away the pollution; and, by the accomplishment of a mystery which angels desire to look into, He brings sinners unto God, where they shall ever rejoice in the purest light and the happiest immortality.

To estimate aright the new moral existence into which Christ ushers every sinner who receives Him,—we have only to reflect how it is that every sinner, apart from Christ, stands towards God. He is either immersed in deep oblivion and unconcern, and so may well be accounted dead to the Being who made and who upholds him; or if his conscience be at all awake to a true sense of his delinquencies from the law, he must view the lawgiver with a feeling of dread and discomfort and jealousy. There is a wide gulph of alienation between him and his Maker; and the habitual the haunting apprehension of God's displeasure towards him, engenders in him back again a habitual dislike towards God. There is no community of affection or confidence betwixt them; and pursued as he is by a conviction of guilt, which he cannot resist and cannot escape from, he imagines a scowl on the aspect of the Divinity —an awful barrier of separation, by which he is hopelessly and irrecoverably exiled from the sacred throne of the Eternal. His spirit is not at ease. It is glad to find relief, in the day-dreams of a passing world, from those solemn realities, the thought of which so agitates and disquiets it. It seeks an opiate in the things of sense and time, against the disturbance which it finds in the things of eternity; and so, cradled in profoundest lethargy, it, while alive unto the world, is dead unto God.

We cannot imagine a greater revolution in the heart, than that which would ensue on the burden of this distrust or of this apathy being done away— when, instead of viewing God with terror, or shrinking from the thought of Him, the sinner would

steadfastly gaze upon His reconciled countenance, and be assured of the complacency and the good-will that were graven thereupon. Now a simple faith in the glad tidings of the gospel is competent to achieve this. It would loosen the spirit's bondage, by merely transforming the aspect of the Divinity from that of an enemy to that of a friend. It would change our indifference or our hatred into love; and this affection, from the central the presiding place which it occupies, would subordinate the whole man, and so utterly change his moral system as to make a new creature of him. The faith of the gospel is something more than the germ of a new hope. It is the germ of a new heart, and so of a new character. The believer's taste and sensibilities are now awake to objects, to which before he was utterly dead; or from which he wont to recoil with strong and sensitive aversion. In other words, he has become alive to these objects. He expatiates on another theatre of contemplation; and he rejoices in other scenes and other prospects than before. He has lost his relish for that in which he formerly delighted. He delights in that for which formerly he had no relish. It is just as if old senses had been extinguished, and as if new ones had been substituted in their place. If he is not ushered into life for the first time, he is at least ushered into a new mode of life for the first time. He undergoes preferment from the animal to the spiritual life; and this life, with the immortality annexed to it, is not only made clear by the gospel—but faith in the gospel may be said to have created it.

Now all this is the doing of the Saviour. I

cannot trust the physician who plays upon the surface of my disease, and throws over it the disguise of false colouring. I have more confidence to put in him, who, like Christ the Physician of my soul, has looked the malady fairly in the face,—has taken it up in all its extent, and in all its soreness—has resolved it into its original principles—has probed it to the very bottom; and has set himself forward to combat with the radical elements of the disease. This is what the Saviour has done with death. He has plucked it of its sting. He has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity operates. It was sin which constituted the virulence in the disease, and He hath extracted it. He hath put it away. He hath expiated the sentence; and the believer, rejoicing in the assurance that all is clear with God, serves Him without fear in righteousness and in holiness all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer in force, against us who believe. The Saviour took the sentence upon Himself. He bore our iniquity. He became sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The sentence is no longer in force against us. The Saviour has cancelled it; and he has done more than this. He has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has extinguished its power. He reigns in the heart of the believer. He sweeps it of all its corruptions. He takes it such as it is—He makes it such as it should be. He brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification—so that while he lives he adds one degree of grace unto another—when he dies he rejoices in hope of

the coming glory—when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unreprovable in the sight of God and of His Saviour. In the whole of this treatment, I see the skill and intelligence and superior management of a physician who is up to the disease; and knows where the main force of its malignity lies—who has a thorough insight into the principle of the mischief, and has reached forward an appropriate remedy to confront it—who, to abolish death, has directed the strength of His attack against sin which is its origin—who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice—and who is destroying its power and its existence, by the operation of that mighty spirit, whereby He can break down the corruption of the human heart and subdue it unto all righteousness.

Believe this done; and the veil is thrown aside which separates you from the glories of heaven—the way lies clear and open before you; and light, pure and satisfying light, gives the highest evidence and splendour to the great doctrine of life and immortality. The grand mystery is resolved. The barrier which kept the sinner at a distance from God is levelled and put away. That barrier was sin; and Christ, by the mighty instruments of His sacrifice and His spirit, has overthrown it. But a victory over sin is a victory over death. Where sin hath no longer any dominion, death hath no longer any claim; and that mighty Being who spoiled principalities and powers hath abolished death, because He conquered sin. True, it still reigns in these mortal bodies; and till the new system of things be established, it will scatter its desolations over the

surface of the world. But the new system is preparing. A place is fitting up in Heaven, for those to whom our Saviour hath given the assurance, that, in His Father's house there are many mansions; and on earth, the Spirit is now working in the hearts of the destined occupiers, and making them meet for the inheritance. These vile bodies must be put off; and others put on, over which death shall have no power. They will persist in bloom and in vigour to eternity. Mighty change in the constitution of the species—mighty change in the material system around us—mighty change in the souls of men, as well as in the bodies which they animate. The bodies we now wear shall moulder into dust—the earth we now tread upon shall be burnt up—the heavens we now gaze at shall pass away as a scroll—But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the beings who live in it shall never die.

Before we conclude, let us refer your attention to the grand agent in this wonderful restoration of a fallen world. The work is His, and it is His only. We must take Him not as a fellow-helper in the cause, but as the Captain of our salvation. It was He who trode the wine-press alone. His was all the contest, and to Him be all the triumph. Let not man offer to usurp or to share it with Him. To Him belongs the work of our redemption, in all its extent and in all its particulars. It was His sacrifice which redeemed us from the punishment of sin; and it is His spirit which redeems us from its pollution. And we contend that man is not in the right attitude for receiving

the mighty benefit, till he has cast down all his lofty imaginations, and resigned himself with gratitude and quietness into the Saviour's hands. "Here I am under the twofold misery, of having been a sinner in time past, and being a sinner still—of having incurred a sentence which I cannot expiate, and of persevering in a path of destruction which I cannot turn from. The case in all its helplessness, and in all its difficulties, I make over wholly to the Saviour. I may as well try to level yonder mountain, as try to master it by my own independent exertions. I obey the invitation of the Saviour—'Come unto me'—I put the case into His hand; and, if I do it in the assured hope that His redemption will provide for it, I shall not be disappointed. If I offer Him the case, He will not refuse to take it up. 'Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' He takes up the case which I have submitted to Him. He examines it in its two leading particulars. I cannot expiate the sentence; but the blood of His atonement can do it for me. I cannot turn from the paths of sin; but He can turn me by His grace—He can reign in me by His spirit—so that though without Him I can do nothing—yet with Him for my strengthener and my friend I can do all things." This then is the finished work, the complete salvation of Jesus Christ. "Whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life." Believe, and you will come forth with alacrity at His call. From the contemplation of your own nothingness, you will cast yourself upon the Saviour and upon His sufficiency. You will make an entire and unconditional surren-

der of yourselves to Him; and be assured, that, from the first moment of your doing so, there will emerge the new hope of the redeemed, and the new life of the sanctified disciple.

And you Christians, who have sat at His table —who have eaten of that bread which is the symbol of His body, and drunk of that wine which is the symbol of His blood—be assured, that, if you have done so, with all the spirituality of a firm and believing dependence on Him as your Saviour, upon you shall the whole of this great redemption be accomplished. You have brought your bodies into contact with the elements of the ordinance; and if you have brought your minds into contact with the things represented by these elements, we can state to you in decisive language what will be the fruit of such fellowship. God is not unfaithful who hath called you unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and we can assert, upon the fidelity of God, upon the unfailing promises of Heaven, upon the strength of a high and unchangeable attribute, upon that truth of the Deity which is printed on all His works and shines through all His revelations—In a word, we can assert upon the solemn asseveration, nay, upon the oath of the Divinity Himself, that all who believe in His Son shall have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Such is the hope of your calling. Hold it firm and fast, even unto the end; and the bed of death will be to you a scene of triumph—the last messenger will be a messenger of joy; and those bright images of peace and rapture and elevation, which, out of

Christ, are the mere fabrication of the fancy, will, in Christ, be found to have a reality and a fulfilment, which shall bear you up in the midst of your dying agonies, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is no longer an idle declamation now. There is many a minister of Christ who could give you experience for it. He can take you to the house of mourning—to the mansion of pain and of sickness —to the chamber of the dying man. He can draw aside the curtain which covers the last hours of the good man's existence, and show you how a Christian can die. He can ask you to bend your ear, and to catch the faltering accents of praise and of piety. What meaneth that joy in the midst of suffering—that hope in the midst of breathlessness and pain—that elevation in the midst of cruellest agonies? It is not his own merit which sustains him. It is the merit of a benevolent Saviour. It is not a sense of his own righteousness which gives intrepidity to his expiring bosom. It is the righteousness of Christ. It is the hope of being found in Him, and a sense of the grace and forgiveness which he has received through His hands. In a word it is Christ who resolves the mystery. It is His presence which throws tranquillity and joy around the scene of distress. It is He who administers vigour to the dying man; and, while despair sits on every countenance, and relatives are weeping around him, He enables him to leave them all with this exulting testimony—O death where is thy sting—O grave where is thy victory!

SERMON XIII.

THE BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short."—1 Cor. vii. 29.

The affirmation of the text may be tried by a most distinct arithmetic. The average of man's life is numerically known. And should there be an overweening confidence to carry our hopes beyond this average, the maximum of life is numerically known. And, to balance the uncertainty whether our days upon earth may not greatly exceed the average, there is an equal uncertainty whether they may not as greatly fall short of it. There is no point, from its origin downwards, in which death may not lay his arrest on the current of human existence; and as if the whole domain of humanity were his own, does he go forth at large from one extreme to the other of it; nor is there a single portion of the territory, on which, with free and unfaltering footstep, he may not enter. In the churchyard, we see graves of every dimension. This land of silence is far more densely peopled by young than by old—proving that through all the departments of life, whether of age, or of youth, or of infancy, the arrows of this mighty destroyer flee at random. Parents have oftener to weep over their children's tomb, than children have to carry their parents to that

place, where lies the mouldering heap of the generations that have already gone by. So that on the side of our text, we have the clearest lights both of arithmetic and of experience; and one would think it superfluous to hold any parley with the understanding, on a topic of which the proof is so overpowering. Why, it may be thought, should we be anxious in urging a truth, which may safely be left to its own evidence? or take occasion strenuously and repeatedly to affirm, what none is able to deny? And this is just the marvellous anomaly of our nature, which it is so difficult to explain. In the face of all this evidence, and in utter opposition to the judgment which is extorted thereby, there is an obstinate practical delusion, that resides most constantly within the hearts, and rules most imperiously over the habits of the vast majority of our species. It is not that we are incapable of all influence from futurity; for it is the future gain of the present adventure, or the future issue of the present arrangement, or the future result of the present contrivance, that sets about the whole of human activity agoing. But it is to the future death, and to the future condition on the other side of it, that we are so strangely insensible. We are all in the glow and bustle and eagerness of most intense expectation, about the events that lie on the intermediate distance between us and death; and as blind to the certainty of the death itself, as if this distance stretched indefinitely onward in the region of anticipation before us, or as if it were indeed an eternity. There is a busy fitful and unsettled dream into which the world has been lulled

as if by fascination; and out of which neither the moan of frequent death-beds, nor the daily tolling of the funeral bell, nor the constant breaking down of existing families, nor the piece-meal falling away of the old society, nor the building up of a new one in its place—we say that there is a deep sleep upon our world, out of which the whole noise and turmoil and terror of these incessant changes, have been totally unable to awaken us.

Nor do we expect of a new utterance about the brevity of time, that it will awaken you. For this purpose there must be the putting forth of a force that is supernatural; and the most experimental demonstration we know of this necessity, is the torpor of the human soul about death, and the tenacity wherewith it stands its ground against the most pathetic and the most palpable exhibitions of it. We are never more assured of man, that he is wholly sold over to the captivity of this world, than on witnessing the strong adherence of his heart to it, under the most touching experiences of its vanity —than on perceiving how unmoved he is out of all his earthliness, whether he go from burials to business, or from business back again to burials—than on observing how, after having carried a neighbour to his grave, and there trod as it were on the confines of the world, he will turn him again with a devotedness as intense and as unbroken to its concerns and companies as before. We affirm, that of the spell which binds him to earth, no power within the compass of nature is able to disenchant him—that argument will not—and the inroads of mortality on his own dwelling-place will not—and

sermons poured forth over the closing grave of the dearest of his family will not—and the evident approaches of the last messenger to his own person will not—And it is indeed a most affecting spectacle to behold, amid the warnings and the symptoms of a dissolution which so speedily awaits him, that he just hugs more closely to his heart that world, which is on the eve of being torn away from his embraces for ever. Give me then a man who is actually alive to the realities of faith; and the inference from all this is, that another power than that of the experience of nature over the feelings of nature, must have been put forth to quicken him. There is not within the compass of all that is visible, any cause competent to the working of such an effect upon the human spirit. The power which awakens it to a sense of spiritual things, cometh from a spiritual quarter. There is nought in the world that is present, which can bring a human soul under the dominion of the world that is to come. One would have thought, that the failures and the fluctuations of time might have shaken the heart of man out of its devotedness to time, and shifted its regards to eternity. But it would appear not. The mere destruction of our earthly dependence, is not enough, to shift our desires and our dependence to that which is heavenly. The losses and the desolations which attach to the life of sense, and the certainty of all its joys and interests being speedily and totally swept away—these, it would appear, will not of themselves germinate within us the life of faith. The unmoved earthliness of the soul, amid all the pathos and

warning and menace and solemn instruction of those affecting changes, which our earth so convincingly exhibits—this, of itself, demonstrates the need that there is, for the might and the mystery of a higher agent, to transform that which is carnal into that which is spiritual. In a word, the decay and the dissolution of all that is below, have no effect in raising the downward tendencies of the heart, which is only cradled thereby into more sunken infatuation, and strangely cleaves with more tenacity to a scene, on which the characters of littleness and frailty and rapid evanescence stand so palpably engraven. This wondrous phenomenon of our nature, convinces us of the doctrine of regeneration. It informs us that no treatment short of this, is able to spiritualize us—that ere our affections can be set on the things which are above, an influence from above must descend upon them; or ere we become alive to the unfading glories and the ethereal delights of the upper sanctuary, there must come down from that sanctuary, the light and the power of a special revelation.

There is a real and a most momentous distinction, between the children of light, and the children of this world; and that is a distinction which ought to be frequently adverted to, in our addresses to every mixed or general congregation. There are those of you, it is to be hoped, who have been born of the Spirit, and so made practically alive to the reality and the emphatic import of eternal things: And, there are those of you, it is to be feared, who have not yet been disturbed, or at least not yet awakened, out of the deep slumbers of carnality;

and to whom, till they are so awakened, the shortness of human life will prove an argument, in every way as feeble and as fruitless, as any that can be drawn out of the magazines either of natural or revealed truth. Let us first therefore endeavour to urge on the former of these two classes, such Christian lessons as the text might lead us at present to administer; and then let us endeavour to urge their conversion to Christianity, on the latter of these two classes, and that still too from the consideration of our text, which, though without the Spirit of God it will fall powerlessly on their consciences, may, by the Spirit of God, which both they and we are bound to pray for, be the very instrument of awakening them.

I. The first lesson that we would urge from the shortness of our abode upon earth, is moderation in regard to all its enjoyments—moderation, whether of desire in the pursuit, or of delight in the possession of them. There is not a stronger indication of time being felt as substantially our all, and of eternity being but a shadowy dream in our imagination, than the full set of our hearts upon the advancement of our condition in this world—so as to bedim all our prospects, and reduce to utter powerlessness all our efforts towards the advancement of our condition in the next world. The plausibility wherewith this undoubted habit of the soul is often palliated, is the duty that lies upon us all, of building up a provision for our family. But then they too are a family of immortals. They too are travelling along a journey that is short, and

towards a long and lasting habitation. And if the accumulation of wealth for the expenses of their road, shuts out all care for the accumulation of that treasure, the purpose of which is to enrich and to beautify their residence for ever—still it resolves itself into that delusion, whereby the things of sense have been made to elbow the things of faith out of the system of human affairs. Every man loves himself; and the preference of time to eternity for himself, gives decisive token of an unbelief about eternity. And most men love their children; and the preference of their time to their eternity, is just in every way as decisive of the same unbelief. The utter relaxation of all Christian guardianship through the week, is but wretchedly redeemed, by the tasks and the formalities of a Sabbath evening; and, on the other hand, the busy and intent and ever-plying carefulness wherewith men will labour for the earthly good of their children, forms the most impressive rebuke that can be given, of the little they do and the listlessness they feel for their unperishable souls. And O did they but compute, both for themselves and for their little ones—how soon the high-blown enterprise, with all its train of sanguine hopes, and dazzling anticipations, and rapidly succeeding centages, and the brilliant perspective, perhaps of a family raised to unbounded affluence, and admitted to all the privileges of free and honourable companionship among the upper circles of society—did they compute, as they would the returns of any worldly adventure, how very soon time with its ceaseless footstep will outstride the whole speculation, and cast both them and

their children's children behind it among the ages that are forgotten—did they but think of the speed and the certainty of that coming day, when their bodies shall be food for the creeping things of the earth; and their souls, if neglected now, shall then be wandering in unprovided nakedness, through the dark realms of condemnation—did they but figure, as well they might, the look of despair, and the language of fell but fruitless execration, which ungodly families will then cast at the parents by whom their eternity has been undone—did they contemplate with adequate feeling, the anguish, and the helplessness, and the hatred, and the scowling reproach, that should then sit on the countenances of those, for whom now they toil so strenuously, and in the splendour of whose coming opulence they rejoice—O how would the deep and the dismal cloud that sits on their ulterior prospect, overshadow the nearer one. And even while they rode in triumph on the wings of this world's prosperity, would they learn to mix trembling with their mirth, and to carry the burden of all their aggrandizement with most reverential and religious soberness.

But on the other hand, and secondly, a dangerous adversity, as well as a dangerous success, may be the portion of many a family; and a boding cloud of disaster may hang and may discharge itself over their earthly habitation; and as they look onward to the scene of their future history in the world, may they feel themselves standing on the margin of a dark and fearful unknown; and even though

daily bread is made sure by the promises of God to all who trust in them—yet who can brook the humiliation of a descent so woful; and what is the charm that can tranquillize the heart into patience, when the shame, and the disappointment, and the terrors of the impending poverty, have thus raised within it the conflict of many agitations. It is thus, that man manifests himself to be as much the creature of sense in the day of his misfortune, as in the day of his prosperity. It proves how fully his affections are set upon the world, when, on gaining it, he rejoices as if he had gained all; but it just proves his affections to be as fully and as exclusively set upon the world, when, on losing it, he abandons himself as utterly to despair as if he had lost all. With a spiritual man, to whose mind spiritual things come home, with the impression of their reality—the consideration of our text would be effectual in both these cases; and while by its first lesson it would reduce the extravagance of his joy, it would by a second lesson equally reduce the extravagance of his distress. It has been well said that the faith of immortality, gives a certain firmness of texture to the soul. It places it on a high and a peaceful summit, which is beyond the reach of all earthly fluctuations. It brings within the ken of the mortal eye, such mighty spaces of bliss and glory interminable, as serve to expunge from the view of the beholder, that short intervening distance by which he is conducted to the margin of this vast territory. It is indeed a high exhibition which the disciple makes of his Christianity, when, sure of the present day because he knows

that its subsistence is guaranteed, and sure of the coming immortality because he has laid his full reliance on the promises of the gospel—he can fearlessly commit the whole of that pilgrimage which lies between these two extremes, to a faithfulness that he knows to be unfailing—when, from the shore of present certainty, he can eye without dismay the brief but the stormy passage that lies on this side of death—when, athwart the dreary wilderness, he can behold the day-star of immortality, and be cheered by the beams of light and love and purity that irradiate therefrom; and, knowing that though the discipline for heaven be severe yet the time of that discipline is short, he can put up with all the pain and all the poverty which are allotted to his life in this world, and possess his soul in hope and in patience.

And there are other and severer ills than those of poverty, wherewith the spirit of a pilgrim may be sorely exercised. There may be the death of friends; and, what perhaps is still more insupportable, there may be their desertion and their treachery. It is in the power of the arch-enemy of our race, to instil of his own spirit into the hearts of men—thus making it possible, even in the fair intercourse of society, to meet with deep and unfeeling cruelty under the guise of kindness; and, in return for the unsuspecting confidence wherewith one pours out the sincerity of his friendship into another's ear, to bring upon himself the unkindness and the wiles and the bitter derision of a cool and crafty deceiver. The great balsam for the wounded heart, under an infliction so painful, is the hope of immortality

—the believing sight of that distant heaven, where cunning and contrivance and brooding secrecy are unknown—where the light of a pure and cloudless transparency, sits upon every character—and not one countenance that there opens upon you with benignity, which does not truly express the glow and the graciousness that are to be found in the innermost recesses of the soul. This cheering hope is the grand medicine of the heart, under the bitterness it may be doomed to experience; but it does add a mellowing influence to the operation, when one thinks of the conflict of all its emotions that it will be soon over—that the triumphs of an infernal policy have but their little and their short-lived day, which will speedily be ended—that a retreat of peacefulness is at hand, in the bosom of which the oppressor and his victim will lie down in their graves together, where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary are at rest.

But this conducts us to the third Christian lesson, to which the consideration of our text might lend a very powerful reinforcement; and that is a lesson of charity, even in the midst of deepest injuries and bitterest provocations. A great deal more than one half of the malignity and exasperation of this world, is due to the want of mutual understanding. We often murmur, the one against the other, just because we misconceive one another. And the proud and stubborn attitude of the two adversaries, and the sullen distance at which they so immoveably stand, and the deep and ireful animosities which rankle within them, and the frenzied imaginations

they have of their mutual deceit and mutual worthlessness, with all the other symptoms of fierce and stout hostility, are often resolvable—not unto the defect of truth or of friendship, but purely into a defect of explanation. Now this ought to have a softening influence. But when even for this, the evidences whether of malice or dishonesty, are too glaring to be resisted, there is something to temper and to mollify all our sensations of wrathfulness, in the thought of the coming disease and the coming deathbed. It were indeed a triumph, could the kindling resentments that now rage and burn within you, be quenched by the waters of compassion; and for this purpose, think we beseech you, even of the greatest enemy you may have in this world —how soon the fatal distemper will seize upon him; and the whole frame of his mortality will shake into dissolution; and he will lie a stricken and irrecoverable patient in most affecting helplessness; and he will send out a voice of feebleness that may implore, but has not strength to upbraid you; and after his lips have quivered and his eyes have rolled at the coming on of the last agony, he will sink away into deep and unbroken stillness. And O if you but saw the pale and peaceful repose, that sits on the dead man's countenance; or, still more, if you could follow his unembodied spirit to that bar, where it stands naked and defenceless before the scrutiny of God; and behold how it trembles there under the piercing inspection of an eye, before which all deceit lies open and all decision must for ever melt away—tell us if this were present to your contemplation as it ought, whether it would

not curb the restless indignancy of your spirit, and whether you would not forget all his injustice and all his cruelties in time, when you thought of the horrors of his undone eternity?

But let us rise from particular lessons to one that is comprehensive of them all—from the separate graces which enter into the sanctification of a disciple, to the work of sanctification at large—from the special virtues, that enter as so many distinct features of worth and loveliness into the Christian character, to the habit of general and most intent diligence in perfecting that character in all its points; and thus standing complete in the whole will of God. There is a mighty work to be done; and few and evil are the days that are allotted for the doing of it. The race of Christianity is a race against time—in which therefore there is not one minute to spare from its earnest and toilsome prosecution. We know that it is the righteousness of Christ, which hath purchased for us our title of entry into Heaven. But there is a righteousness which must adhere personally to ourselves, that we may be qualified for Heaven's exercises and heaven's joys. He hath recovered for us our inheritance, and our birth-right; and we must now enter upon our course of education, that we may become meet for the inheritance, and be qualified for doing honour to our birth-right, by the acquirement of all those graces and proprieties, which become the possession of it. It may be by an act of undeserved patronage, that a place of favour and emolument in the service of your earthly monarch is conferred upon you. But yet, after all,

there must be a training for the place, and an examination of your personal fitness for its duties, ere you are inducted into it. A mansion of glory in the upper paradise, is just such a place of favour and distinction, under the eye of your Monarch who is in heaven—given freely through Christ Jesus to all who will; but still a place for which you must be trained, and on the success of which training you have to undergo a trial and an examination, and must have an approving sentence proclaimed, ere the door of heaven shall be opened to you. On that day we shall be taken account of, not according to our dogmata but according to our doings; and we shall not be admitted to any part of the salvation that is through the blood of Christ, unless it be found that we have a part in the salvation that is by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And to work out this salvation, there must on our part be a fear, and a trembling; and an earnest supplication for that grace of God, which can alone work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and an ever-plying diligence in the cultivation of our personal character, that we may be found without spot and blemish in the day of Jesus Christ; and such a contest with nature, as that the spirit of the gospel may prevail over it, and sin, though not so eradicated as that we shall be free of its hateful presence, may be so subdued as that we shall be free of its hateful tyranny. And is this a work, we would ask, that is only to be taken up at random opportunities; and abandoned to such scraps of leisure and convenience, as the busy history of a

life spent in worldliness can afford; and put off indefinitely to those rare and occasional spaces, which may or may not cast up, when a respite from the manifold urgencies of the world meets and is at one with the caprice of our own inclinations. This may do with those who can recline themselves in the arms of their fancied orthodoxy, or it may do with those who think that the sobrieties of civil life are preparation enough for the sacredness of heaven. But it will not do with those, who, aware, of the mighty transformation that is called for into another heart and another character than before, labour to realize upon their persons that very Christianity which shone forth in the days of the New Testament—when the all things whatsoever of human life, were consecrated to the glory of Him who is the Author of it; and the lamp of religion was fed by the incense of a perpetual offering; and prayer without ceasing, and watchfulness with all perseverance, spoke the habitual attitude of men whose lives were ever girded for the work and girded for the warfare —who, in every change of experience, could find a something to do, that marked the discipleship on which they had entered; and, on the constant outlook of defence against the disturbing forces of the world, could keep an unstained purity in the midst of its most deceitful blandishments, and a fervent unabated charity of spirit when assailed by its host of most galling provocations.

There is indeed a mighty work to be done ere we die—that of crucifying the old man, and making a new man all over again—that of resisting the desires and the habits of nature, till they are at

least vanquished, if not exterminated—that of transmuting the character of earth which we have at the first, into the character of heaven which we must acquire afterwards, else heaven we shall never reach. The distance great as it is between the two states must be traversed on this side of death, or we shall never attain a state of blessedness on the other side of death. It is a far journey; and short is the period that we have for the performance of it. With many of us the day is far spent; and the shades of night are gathering around us; and we still linger, and hesitate, and send forth our few feeble and ineffectual aspirations, at the mere outset of this vast enterprise. The thing to be accomplished is, that we shall be translated from the mastery of sin to the mastery of grace; or that the works of the flesh shall be abandoned, and the fruits of the spirit shall flourish upon our persons abundantly. Ere these mortal bodies go into dissolution, the life of Christ must be made manifest in them—"else when they are raised again, and sisted before His judgment seat, they will be found unfit of occupancy in any of His everlasting habitations. The distance between hell and heaven is not greater, than is the distance between sin and sacredness; and what we have distinctly to do while we are in the world, is to make good our departure from the one territory and our entrance upon the other; and, clearing our way from the entanglements which detain us on the outcast and accursed region, to break forth on a career of prosperous and progressive holiness.

Now one entanglement may detain us as effectu-

ally as a thousand; and the finer subtleties of the world as powerfully enslave and implicate the heart, as do its most gross and revolting criminalities. Ye men, who sit at ease as if your work was over, or as if only a little of it was yet left which may be done at any time—we do not charge you with such sins, as go to deform your visible history. But we bid you remember that ungodliness is a sin—that causeless anger is a sin—that brooding anxiety is a sin—that dependence on the creature is a sin—that langour in religion is a sin—that distaste for prayer is a sin. We bid you think that countless are the sins which go to desecrate the spirit, while they leave the aspect of the exterior morality entire; and the busy discipline to which you are called, is to war against and to subjugate them all. It lies with the single strength of any one of them, to keep you moored on forbidden ground; and we therefore ask, whether, escaped from them all, you are now bending in full sail to that land of uprightness, where nought that is unholy can enter? You perhaps would like it better, could you let down the guardianship of your spirits, and sink into the arms of an inert and unfruitful orthodoxy. But know that the grace of the gospel is held forth, not that you may indulge but that you may deny ungodliness. This it teaches, and this it enables us; and the full proof that you have to give of your discipleship is, that you are earnestly aspiring after the whole perfection of heaven, and, through the implored agency of the Spirit on your hearts, that you are daily coming nearer to it.

It is by the perseverance of your conduct in the walk of the Spirit, that the life of the Spirit in your souls is upholden. The Holy Ghost is given to those who obey Him. Every act of charity, nourishes the principle of charity. Every act of forbearance, strengthens you the more against the assault of future provocations. Every commitment of your anxieties to God, trains you more to the habit of thus disposing the heavier anxieties that still may offer to oppress and to overwhelm you. The doings of the Christian life go to enfeeble all the corruption that is resisted, and to confirm all the graces which have been put into operation. By reason of use, there is a prompter discernment, and a readier preference of all that is good—a quicker recoil, and more resolute departure from all that is evil. It is thus that every honest disciple, toils his laborious way through the course of sanctification. He spares neither prayers nor pains, in this steep ascent up the hill of difficulty. He makes fast work of it; for that time is precious which is dealt out in small and precarious measurement, and when nevertheless a work on which eternity hangs remains to be accomplished. And thus it is, that he makes a business of the concerns of his soul—watching, and working, and connecting all his movements below with the eye of Him that looketh from above—denying himself at every time of temptation, and crowding every day of his brief endurance in the world with the deeds of new obedience.

We know not a text of more urgent and alarming import in the Bible, than that the righteous

scarcely shall be saved. They will make out the prize of eternal life; but like the victorious courser in the race, they will make it as by the distance of a hair-breadth. Compare the task to be done, with the time that there is for the doing of it; and how it should speed us on to the business of our eternity; and what an occupying of all our hours, and a plying of all our expedients ought there to be—lest when the night cometh in which no man can work, we shall be found short of the kingdom of God.

II. But this carries us to the second head of discourse. If the righteous scarcely shall be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear? We are called to kiss the Son, while He is in the way. It is a short and a little while. The season of offered mercy is speeding onward to its close. In a few years, the likeliest of us all will be swept away from the land of gospel calls and gospel opportunities. The voice of a beseeching God is upon us only until death—after which the voice ceases to be heard; and the light of the Sun of righteousness is lifted up no longer; and the fountain that is opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, has an everlasting seal set upon it; and a dark and impassable gulph of separation, opens asunder, between the souls of the impenitent and the blood of sprinkling. Kiss the Son then while He is in the way; or, mark the alternative, His wrath will begin to burn. He who now is all meekness and gentleness and kind entreaty, will then look upon you with an altered countenance; and it is indeed a striking expression—the wrath of the

Lamb—the wrath of Him who is denoted by that which is the emblem of patience and non-resistance and timidity—a wrath then, to the excitement of which, there must have been a series of deep and bitter provocations—a wrath, ye careless and ye worldly, that you are now treasuring up unto the day of its outpouring—when you shall cry in vain for the rocks and the mountains to cover you; and will be made to feel that no indignation burns more fiercely than the indignation of slighted tenderness, and no vengeance more overwhelming than the vengeance of offered and rejected mercy.

Nor should we marvel at such a catastrophe—for only think of the way in which it is brought on. That Christ should so have toiled and suffered for our sakes—that He should have descended on our miserable world, from that eminence of pure and peaceful glory which He had before occupied—that He should have put on the infirmities of our nature, and shrouded His Godhead in a tabernacle of flesh, which He took back with Him to Heaven, and which, for ought we know, will adhere to Him there throughout all eternity—that, amid the agonies of a mysterious conflict, He should have poured out His soul; and, undertaking for the guilty millions of our race, should have borne the whole weight of their chastisement—that, during the hour and the power of darkness, He, in the depths of a passion that well nigh overwhelmed Him, should in love to men have weathered such an endurance; when the sword of righteous vengeance was awakened against Him; and the cup of retribution was put into His hands, and drunk by Him

to its very dregs; and the vials of an incensed and insulted Lawgiver should have been poured forth by the Father upon the Son, when He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice—that thus He should have travailed; and thus He should have put forth all the energies both of strength and of suffering, that the mountain of our iniquity may be levelled, and we may pass over in peace and safety unto God—that, after having made reconciliation, He should rise again to the place from whence He came, and be hailed by the shoutings of the celestial as the author and the finisher of a mighty enterprise—that, after having entered there, He should turn His face to that world in whose behalf this movement was made; and mark how the men of it were prizing the vast redemption, and crowding the now open gate of transition which leads from sin unto the Saviour—Just think of this, and call you it no provocation, that, after the cost and the labour of rearing such an apparatus, the overtures thereof should fall in listlessness and without efficacy on the hearts of our alienated species—that this great work of deliverance should be vilified into a thing of nought, and by the very creatures for whose deliverance and whose welfare it was accomplished—that we should slight these tidings of the gospel as insignificant, or impatiently spurn them as an offence away from us.—O, think of all this, and you will be at no loss to comprehend, why He, who now stands out in the winning gentleness of His nature, and bends with longing compassion over you, should then come forth in vindictiveness and fury, on all who have put to mockery the dear-

bought privilege; and on all who have unthankfully scorned, the grace and the mercy of so precious an invitation.

This day of wrath is at hand. To you at least the time is short, when its fire will burn around you, and, through the openings of your mortal framework, as it goeth into dissolution, will it enter the premises, and seize the affrighted soul that now occupies therein. While in the body the surrounding materialism serves as a screen between us and the Deity; and we can escape into a temporary oblivion of Him and of His anger, among the scenes and the pursuits and the enjoyments of this visible world. But there is no such screen between God and the disembodied spirit—nothing that can shield it from the sight of His rebuking countenance, and the immediate glance of His fiery indignation. We are bidden now, to speed our way from this impending storm; and by movements too which are all expressive of rapidity—to flee from the coming wrath—to flee for refuge unto Christ—to haste and make no delay that we should keep the commandments. All which precepts, betoken the urgency of a matter on hand. And with reason too, for, if it do not become better, your condition is daily becoming worse—your conscience more seared against the denunciations of the law—your heart more proof against the terrors of the threatened vengeance—your whole person more warped among the entanglements of sin, and more helplessly captive than before to the great adversary. This day may aggravate your danger. This call that is now sounded, ye impenitent, in your hearing—if it

kindle no purpose of amendment in your bosoms, may kindle a fiercer wrath in the bosom of the Divinity. Even now, may you be adding to the store of displeasure that is kept in reserve for the great day of its manifestation. And close as you are to the brink of eternity, and short as the period is, that will conduct you to its verge and plunge you into its abyss for ever—we ask, is it for you thus to accumulate the wrath of God, and to cradle your souls into a delusive peace, on the very eve of its discharge upon you?

Despise not the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; but know that the goodness of God should lead thee to repentance. And do not, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

O avail yourselves, then, of the precious moment that is now passing over you. Christ is offered to you. Salvation is at your choice. Forgiveness, through the blood of a satisfying atonement, is yours if you will. God does not want to magnify the power of His anger—He wants to magnify the power of His grace upon you. Try to approach Him in your own righteousness; and you will find yourselves toiling at an impracticable distance away from Him. But come with the righteousness of Christ as your plea; and you will indeed be permitted to draw nigh. God will rejoice over you for the sake of Him in whom He is well pleased; and you may freely, and with all your heart, rejoice in God, through Him, by whom ye have received

the atonement. Could we state the thing more plainly, we would. We want to bring you into the condition of a simple receiver of God's pardon —a simple holder on the truth of His promises. It is on this footing, and on this alone, that you will ever be clothed in the garments of acceptance; or stand firmly and surely on the ground of reconciliation before Him. O turn then into this peaceful haven; and, in the act of so turning, God will pour out His Spirit upon you. As the fruit of your faith, you will become a new creature; and on stepping over to that region of sunshine where all is gladness, you will be sure to experience also that all is grace—that the peace and purity of the gospel are ever in alliance—They who walk before God without fear, being they who walk before Him in righteousness and in holiness all the days of their life.

SERMON XIV.

THE FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS.

"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country."—HEBREWS xi. 14.

IT is in the power of actions, as well as of words, to declare plainly; and the patriarchs of this chapter made it as plain by what they did as by what they said, whither it was that their desires and their affections were tending. Nothing could be more explicit of this, than the practice of Abraham—who gave up the place of his nativity; and tore himself away from all its charms and endearments; and became a pilgrim in an unknown land: And in the hope of a very distant fulfilment, which he saw to be yet afar off, and lying greatly beyond the period of his life in the world, did he shape every movement of that life, at the bidding of Him who had uttered a promise, and in whose hand alone lay the accomplishment of it. What is very well termed a man's general drift, stood most palpably out on the whole of his history. And in the same way, every human being has a prevailing drift, that may, in most instances, be pretty accurately gathered from certain obvious and characteristic indications, which are ever obtruding themselves on the notice of by-standers.

But there is a distinction to be remarked here. It may sometimes not be so very plain, what the

particular interest is, which a man is prosecuting with the main force and intentness of his ambitious desires—whether it be the love of money, or the love of power, or the love of acceptance and goodwill in society, or the love of eminence above his fellows by the lustre of a higher literary reputation. It may sometimes require a force of discernment to ascertain what the leading object of pursuit is—while, without any stretch of penetration at all, it may glare upon us with the whole broadness of day, where it is that the object thus aspired after is locally situated. I may not be able to pronounce of the most bustling and ambitious member of our city corporation, whether his heart is most set on the acquirement of a princely fortune, or on a supreme ascendancy over all his compeers in the political management of this great community. But whether it be the one or the other, I can say on the instant, that the great theatre of his fond and favourite exertion is this, the place of our habitation—that it is here, and not in the neighbouring metropolis, where his various interests lie—that the game in which he is engaged is the business of this city, or the polities of this city, and not the business or the polities of any other—that it is among home society round him, where he seeks to signalize himself, whether by wealth, or by influence, or by popularity; and not in any remote or distant society with whom no sympathies are felt, and for whose homage either to his dignity, or to his opulence, no anxiety whatever has been conceived. All this may be plain enough, without any piercing anatomy at all into the mysteries of the human char-

acter—so that, however difficult it may be to ascertain the precise interest which most engrosses the aim of any given individual, there may be nothing difficult in the question of the precise locality, where all his interests and all the choice objects of his taste and of his affections are to be found.

And thus, in like manner, while skill, and subtlety, and great power and ingenuity of moral perception may be necessary, to estimate what that thing in the world is, which any of its people is most in quest of—yet it may be resistlessly evident to every eye, that they are the things and interests of this world, and not of any other, on which all its people are lavishing their time and their thoughts and the earnestness of their best and most devoted regards. We may not be able so to dissect the moral constitution of an acquaintance, as to find out of him, what that precise earthly object is, which wields the most tyrannical ascendancy over his affections—and, yet be very sure, all the while, that the object is an earthly and not a heavenly one—that it is ease, or fortune, or fame, or sensible indulgence (though you do not know which of them), on this side of time; and neither any enjoyment, nor any glory on the other side of it—that it is perhaps the advancement of a rising family, stopping short however within the confines of the present life, without one thought of advancing either themselves or their children to a station of immortality. One would need to be profoundly intimate with the hidden mysteries of our nature, to trace the numerous shadings, and varieties of worldliness that obtain in our species. But it may be a matter

of the most obvious recognition to the most simple of men, that worldliness, in some shape or other, is the great pervading element of all its generations. This much at least may be seen, without the piercing eye, either of scholar or of satirist; and while the apostle said of the faithful whom he was enumerating, how they declared plainly that they were seeking a future and a distant country—we may say of nearly all whom we know, and of all whom we look upon in society, that they declare as plainly the world to be the only scene on which their hopes and their wishes do expatiate, and an atmosphere of unmingled worldliness to be the only element they breathe in.

It is not either that man is actually satisfied with present things. It is not that he has set him down in placid acquiescence, among the creatures and the circumstances by which he is for the moment surrounded. We see nothing of the repose of full and finished attainment, with any of our acquaintances. There is none of them, in fact, who is not plainly stretching himself forward to some one distant object or other; and, as the tokens of one who is evidently on a pursuit, do we behold him in a state of motion and activity and busy endeavour. But when we come to inquire into the nature of the object that so stimulates his desires and his faculties, do we find it to be a something which lies within the confines of mortality—a something suited only to such senses and such powers of enjoyment, as death will extinguish—a something that he may perhaps hand down to posterity, but which a few rapid years will wrest away from himself,

and that by an act of everlasting bereavement. We cannot move amongst our fellows, whether in meetings, or in market-places, or even on those convivial occasions when man is so willing to drown all his graver anxieties in the playfulness of a passing hour, without most plainly perceiving that the present is not enough for him—that he is constantly going forth in anticipation on some distant future, which he has not realized—that, instead of the quiescence of one who has found, there is with him all the forecast and restlessness and outlook of one who is still agog and is seeking. There is not an individual we know, who is not bending thus onwards, and that, with the set and strenuousness of his whole heart, on some object which lies or appears to lie in the perspective before him. But when we come to inquire, how far on in the line of his history it may be placed, we find, in the overwhelming majority of instances, that it belongs to the region of sense, and almost never to the region of spirituality—that the main force of human ambition is lavished on some swift and splendid evanescence, which cannot last to any single possessor beyond the limits of his own puny generation—that all are seeking, no doubt; but where is the discoverable symptom, of almost any seeking beyond the confines of that territory, which God hath spread under our feet, first for the sustenance, and then for the sepulture of human bodies? Where is almost the man who is prosecuting, with the assiduity of a business, his personal interest in that country where dwell the spirits of the just made perfect? This tendency towards the distant un-

seen, stood out most plainly and most declaredly on the history of the believing patriarchs. But now the tendency of almost every man we see, is plainly the opposite of this—so that on travelling the round of human experience, it may nearly be affirmed without alleviation of all, that, amid the heat and the hurry and the hard-driving of creatures in full pursuit of a something that lies in the distance before them, it is uniformly a something which they can only hold in frail and fleeting tenantry while they abide in this world; and which death, remorseless and unescapable death, will soon ravish eternally from their grasp.

To behold in man such a proneness to futurity, and at the same time such a perverseness in all his computations of futurity—to see him so disdainful of the past, and so dissatisfied with the present, and yet, in labouring for the future, to fix his regards on that only futurity which must soon be present, and soon be irrevocably past—to see him so boundless in his desires, and yet so averse to that alone field of enterprise where he can have scope for them, and so unwilling to exchange the objects of time for those of a boundless eternity—to perceive him so obstinately and so peremptorily blind in this matter, and that not merely in the face of most obvious arithmetic, but in the face of most urgent and affecting mementoes with which the sad history of every year is strewing his path in this world of mortality—Surely it is one of the strangest mysteries of our nature, and at the same time, one of the strongest tokens of its derangement, that man should thus embark all his desires in a frail and crazy vessel,

so soon to be engulphed by that sweeping whirlwind which sooner or later will overtake the whole of our existing generation—or that, on the quicksands of time, he should rear his only resting place, and even please himself with the delusion of its firm and secure establishment—though he knows, and most assuredly knows, that a few little years will witness its total and irremediable overthrow.

But to alleviate this gross infatuation, it may be said, and with plausibility too, that the region of sense and the region of spirituality are so unlike the one to the other—that there is positively nothing in our experience of the former, which can at all familiarize our minds to the anticipation of the latter. And then, as if to intercept the flight of our imaginations forward to eternity, there is such a dark and cloudy envelopment that hangs on the very entrance of it. Ere we can realize that distant world of souls, we must pierce our way beyond the curtain of the grave—we must scale this awful barricado which separates the visible from the invisible—we must make our escape from all the close and warm and besetting urgencies, which, in this land of human bodies, are ever plying us with constant and powerful solicitation; and force our spirits across the boundaries of sense, to that mysterious place, where cold and meagre and evanescent spectres dwell together in some unknown and incomprehensible mode of existence. We know not, if there be another tribe of beings in the universe who have such a task to perform. Angels have no death to undergo. There is no such affair of unnatural violence between them and their

final destiny. It is for man, and for aught that appears, it is for man alone, to fetch from the other side of a material panorama that hems and incloses him, the great and abiding realities with which he has everlastingly to do. It is for him, so locked in an imprisonment of day, and with no other loop-holes of communication between himself and all that is around him than the eye and the ear—it is for him to light up in his bosom a lively and realizing sense of the things which eye hath never seen, and ear hath never heard! It is for man, and perhaps for man alone, to travel in thought over the ruins of a mighty dissolution; and, beyond the wreck of that present world by which he is encompassed, to conceive that future world in which he is to expatiate for ever. But, harder achievement perhaps than any, it is for man, in the exercise of faith, to brave that most appalling of all contemplations, the decay and dissolution of himself; to think of the time when his now animated framework, every part of which is so sensitive and so dear to him, shall fall to pieces—when the vital warmth, by which at present it is so thoroughly pervaded, shall take its departure, and leave to coldness and to abandonment, all that is visible of this moving and active and thinking creature—when those limbs with which he now steps so firmly, and that countenance out of which he now looks so gracefully, and that tongue with which he now speaks so eloquently, and that whole body for the interest and provision of which he now labours as strenuously as if indeed it were immortal—when all these shall be reduced to one mass of putrefac-

tion, and at length crumble with the coffin which incloses them into dust. Why, to a being in the full consciousness and possession of his living energies, there is something, if we may be allowed the expression, so foreign and so unnatural in death, that we are not to wonder if it scare away the mind from that ulterior region of existence to which it is the stepping-stone. Angels have no such transition of horror and mystery to undergo. There is no screen of darkness like this, interposed between them and any portion of their futurity, however distant; and it appears only of man, that it is for him to drive a breach across that barrier which looks so impenetrable, or so to surmount the power of vision as to carry his aspirings over the summit of all that vision has made known to him.

Now if this be the work of faith, you will perceive that it is not just so light and easy an achievement as some would apprehend. Why, there are some who seem to feel as if nothing more were required for the completion of this work, than merely to adjust the orthodoxy of their creed, and then have done with it. To acquire faith is with them as simple an affair, as to learn their catechism. Let them only import a sound metaphysic notion into the head; and this, they think, will bear them upward into heaven, though their treasure is not there and their heart is not there. To seize upon the title-deed to heaven, they feel as if they had nothing more to do, than to seize upon some certain dogma in the science of Theology: and that by keeping firm hold of this, they hold a kind of legal or stipulated security for a place in the inheritance above. Faith is with

them a mere embrace, by the understanding, of one or more articles in an approved system of Divinity. It is enough, in their imagination, to have a right to glory—that they be intellectually right about the matter of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. Heaven is somehow looked upon as a reward to the believer for the soundness of his speculative opinions. The faith which is unto salvation, is regarded in no other light than as the bare recognition of certain doctrinal truths, and the salvation itself as a return for such a recognition. The indolence of a mere theoretical contemplation, is thus substituted for the practice and the pains-taking and the perseverance of men, in busy pursuit of some object to which they are bending forward, with the desire and the diligence of an earnest prosecution. Instead of the attitude of men who are seeking, you witness the repose and the complacency of men who have already found. They look as if they had gotten all they want—a sort of mystical assurance for the next world, but without one expression beaming forth from the history of their lives, that they felt themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the present world. There is positively nothing about them, which declares plainly, as with the patriarchs of old, that they are seeking a country. With the understanding, they occasionally meditate on heavenly things; but with the affections they uniformly and habitually mind earthly things. We see nothing to distinguish them from others in the style of their great practical movements in the world; nor can we characterize their faith in any other terms, than as a mere en-

tertainment given by the mind to the topics of an inert and unproductive theory.

Now this is really not the apostolical description of faith. It is not that which heads the enumeration of those Old Testament worthies, who exemplified the power and the operation of this principle. The assent of the understanding to any one of the positions of orthodoxy, is neither the substance of things hoped for, nor is it the evidence of things not seen; or rather, as it should have been translated, it is not the confident expectation of things hoped for, neither is it the clear and assured conviction of things which are not seen. This last is the principle which set all the patriarchs in motion. They saw future things, with as fresh and operative a feeling of their reality, as they saw present things; and they acted, not merely on the matters that were near and around them, but also on the matters that were in the distance before them: and believing equally in both, they just measured their path and their proceedings in the world, according to the real importance of both. This is faith; and you see how immediately, and without the intervention of a single step, practice emerges out of it—and how, by its simple presence in the mind, futurity obtains the ascendancy over all the purposes of the mind—and how, just as naturally as a man will prepare his house for the visit of a friend, because he knows his friend is coming, will a man prepare himself for the visit of his Saviour, because he believes and knows that his Saviour is coming. And hence the reason why the apostle minded not earthly things, but had his conversation in heaven, was, because

from that place he looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—All illustrative of this, that, by faith, a moving and prevailing force upon the conduct is made to lie in the consideration of that which is coming, as well as in the urgency of that which is at hand; that the way in which the reality of a man's faith is attested, is by present but lesser interests being made to give way to future and greater ones; and that it is only he who declares plainly by his doings, that he is in quest of these future interests, it is he and he only who also declares that he is in the faith.

Think for one moment of the apostolical definition of faith. It is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen—or, as it should have been rendered, it is the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the clear and assured conviction of things not seen. It is that which gives to an interest that is future, all the urgency and deciding power upon the conduct, which belong to an interest that is present: And should the future interest be greater than the present, and they come into competition, the one with the other, faith is that which resolves him who is under its influence, to give up the immediate gratification for the sake of the distant advantage. Thus it is, essentially and by its very nature, a practical principle: and no sooner does it take possession of the heart of any individual, than it holds out the plain attestation of itself upon his history—and not by his dogmata, but by his doings.

But in the work of seeking, it is possible to go astray. Paul gives an instance of this when he

records it of his own countrymen, that they sought but stumbled, because they sought to establish a righteousness of their own. They sought to win Heaven by purchase, instead of humbling themselves to the acceptance of it as a present. But to make out this, man must either equalize his doings to the demands of the law; or the shortness of the doings from the demands must just be overlooked, and a polluted obedience be sustained by God as an adequate price for the rewards of eternity. The former way of it is impossible. Man has already fallen short; and lost a distance, which he, with all his strenuousness, cannot recover; and incurred a guilt, which he, with all his payments and all his penances, cannot atone for. The latter way of it is equally impossible. If it be true that man cannot clear himself of guilt, it is just as true that God cannot connive at it. It were carrying heaven by storm, and forcing a way into it over the ruins of the divine government—were the creature, on the strength of his own deservings, to challenge a place in it, while one single commandment that had fallen from the mouth of the Creator was either undone or resisted. And when that creature is man, so far gone in disobedience—such an attempt is marked both by a haughty presumption in himself, and by a most debasing sense of what was due to the holiness and authority of God. Man's obedience is not worthy of heaven, as a reward from God—however worthy heaven may be of God's munificence, as His free and unmerited donation to man. The gospel never relaxes into any compromise with human

unworthiness—when it affirms the footing upon which eternal life is held forth to our species. It is not earned by us in the shape of wages. It is offered to us in the shape of a grant; and, whatever be the way in which we are to seek after a place in the kingdom of God, it is not by labouring to render an equivalent price either in our property or in our services, that we shall obtain the possession of it.

Heaven is held out in the gospel, not in bargain as a reward to our performance of God's precepts, but simply in anticipation as a fulfilment to our hope of God's promises; and what place it may be asked is there for seeking after this? How shall we seek that which is already gotten? or what conceivable thing is there to do, in quest of a benefit that is offered to our hand; and on the honesty of which offer we have merely to lay an unfaltering reliance? We can understand how to go about it, when the matter is to seek that which we must work for. But if heaven be not of works but of grace, what remains but to delight ourselves in the secure anticipation of that, which we should count upon as a certainty, instead of labouring for it as if it were a contingency that hung upon our labours?

And yet they are promises, and nothing else, which put all the patriarchs into motion. It was just because they saw these promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth—it was just because of all this, that they declared plainly, both by their desires and by their

doings, that they sought a country. Had the land of Canaan been proposed to Abraham as a thing to be purchased for a price adequate to its value, he would never have moved a single footstep towards the acquisition of it. But when proposed to him on the simple footing of a promise, and to obtain a right to the land he had nothing to do but to accept of it—from that moment he set himself busily forward, in prosecution of all the required steps by which he and his posterity were, not to buy a thing that was for sale, but to enter on the possession of a thing that was given. And it is quite the same of the heavenly Canaan. Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord—a thing not purchased by us, but purchased for us by another—a matter so gigantically beyond any price that man could render for it, that, if held up to him in this aspect, it would look and rightly look to his despairing eye as if placed in the region of impossibility away from him—a height of privilege and of glory, not to be scaled by human virtue at its utmost strenuousness; and therefore brought down to human attainment, by the opening of a mediatorial gate, through which one and all of us are invited to enter upon the joys of immortality. But, instead of bidding him enter upon these joys, bid him earn them, and that by the produce of his own industry; and then, as surely as a task felt to be insurmountable instead of stirring up his powers weighs them down to inactivity—so surely will heaven, held out not as a loving offer but as a legal payment, fasten such a drag upon his exertions as is quite immoveable. Grace has been charged

with ministering to human indolence. But it is free grace, and nothing else, which unfastens this drag—which releases man from the imprisonment that formerly held him—which brings him out to a large and open space, and sets an object of hopefulness before him that he knows to be accessible—which breaks him loose from the grasp of that law, from whose condemnation and whose penalties he felt so inextricable. So that, instead of doing nothing for heaven, when the gulph of a pathless separation stood in the way of it, he can now embark on a career of approximation, where, by all his doings, and by all his seekings, he may declare plainly that heaven is indeed the country to which he is travelling.

It is said of the patriarchs in this chapter, that they were not only persuaded of the promises, but that they embraced them. To be persuaded of them, was to believe in the truth of the promises; to embrace them was to make choice of the things promised. Abraham chose his prospects in a distant country, rather than his possessions in the country of his father; and, in the prosecution of this choice, did he abandon the latter, and plainly declare, by all his subsequent doings, that he was seeking and making progress towards the former. And a believer, now-a-days, is not only persuaded that he has heaven for the acceptance of it; but he actually accepts, and, in so doing, he, like the father of the faithful, makes a preference between two objects which stand in competition before him. He chooses heaven rather than earth—the country he has in promise, rather than the country he has

in possession—the place where God is revealed in sensible glory, rather than the place that has been so long unblest and unvisited by any manifestations of His presence—the land of holy and upright and obedient creatures, rather than this land of moral uproar and disorder, where selfishness and sensuality and sin have dethroned the authority of Heaven's law from the hearts of a degenerate family. To make intelligent choice of such a heaven as this, is surely to prefer all that is in it and about it, to the world and the things that are in the world; and the more that it is true of our nature, and is averred most strenuously in the Bible, that our affection for both is impossible. The man who chooses heaven rather than earth, chooses what is essentially characteristic of heaven, rather than what is essentially characteristic of earth; or, in other words, he makes choice of the piety of heaven, and the purity of heaven, and the benevolence of heaven. It is not by these that he purchases for himself a place in paradise; but it is by these, that he prepares himself both for the doings and for the delights of paradise. It is by these, that he brings his taste and his temper into conformity with that which is celestial. It is by these, that he becomes a fit recipient for all those sensations of blessedness which are current there. It is not by these, that he secures his right to the inheritance above; for this was put into his hand at the very outset of his spiritual journey. But it is by these, that he secures what is no less indispensable, he secures in his own person a capacity for the joys of that inheritance; and by a transformation of character from

the secular to the sacred, he can now breathe with kindred delight in an atmosphere of sacredness.

The point at which heaven is accepted as a gift, so far from marking that place in the history of a believer when he gives up his activity because he has now gotten all that he wants, marks the place of his breaking forth on a career of activity—at the entrance of which he was before bound by a spell that no exertion of his could dissipate. It is the very point at which he is released from the bondage of hopelessness; and when, instead of idly aspiring after an object that is unattainable, he sets forth in the prosecution of an object now placed within his reach. It is not in proportion as the freeness of grace becomes manifest to the soul, but just in proportion as it is darkened by the fears and the fancies of legality, that the inquirer is kept back on his journey heavenwards. And it is not true that he has gotten all he wants, when by faith he has gotten his justification. This has done no more for him than to open up the commencement of his path. It has only given him the right of entry into heaven; but it has not given those preparations of the heart and the character, without which heaven would be an abode of weariness. One can conceive that the mere right of entry, may be enough to satisfy the man who is merely persuaded of heaven being his by faith; but it is not enough for the man who has embraced heaven as the chosen good of his existence. Ere he can attain the comfort of heaven, he must work himself into the character of heaven. It is not enough that there be rapture from without. There must

be a relish from within. It is a place of happiness to none, but to those who have a heart for its kind of happiness. It is guilt which has closed the gate of heaven against the men of our rebellious generation; and there is not one of them, who would ever labour to qualify himself for the employments or the society of a place that he could not enter. But by the death of Christ, the guilt is washed away; and the gate is opened—and all to whom these tidings of joy come with acceptance, feel as if a fetter had been struck off from their persons, and so set themselves forth to the work of preparation. It is indeed the loosing of a bond, by which they who aforetime were stationary become free to move, and actually do move with alacrity as did the Psalmist. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord."

At the time when man was exiled from beyond the circle of God's favoured and unfallen creation, he had acquired a guilt by which he forfeited the place of his original settlement; and he had acquired a depravity by which he became incapable both of its duties and its enjoyments. To retrieve this woful departure, so as to be admitted again to the standing which he before occupied—the guilt behoves to be atoned for, the depravity behoves to be done away. For the first, man is as incom-

petent as he is to liquidate the debt of millions by the produce of his daily labour; and not till the discharge is obtained for him by another, will all his practice in the sight of God be any thing else than presumption, and all his attempts to establish a righteousness of his own, but demonstrate the utter worthlessness and incapacity of him who makes them. For the second he of himself is equally incompetent. But the same Mediator who for him hath wrought the first of these purposes, works in him the second of them. And this he does, not by superseding the activity of man, but by stimulating that activity—not by setting aside the machinery of human will and human intelligence and human action, but by setting to work that very machinery —So that the man who before could not labour with any effect at all, both because he was without strength, and also because the obstacle of unexpiated guilt stood like a wall of iron in his way—now that the obstacle is removed, and now that the power of Christ is made to rest on the person of every honest and aspiring disciple—now begins that great process of transition in his history, by which he departs from the character and the habits of a mere citizen of earth, and plainly declares that his heart is set upon other joys and he desireth a better country, that is a heavenly.

But the plain indication which Abraham gave of his seeking another country, than the one which harboured all the friendships and all the interests of nature, is different from the indication given of the same thing by a modern Christian. He demonstrated this by a visible act of locomotion. He simply

left the place of his nativity, and went forth in quest of a promised land; and, by a movement palpable to the eye of the body, did he prove that he renounced present things in pursuit of other things which were distant and unseen. The Christian who sets out for the heavenly Canaan, and in so doing takes his departure from the Mesopotamia of this world, has not one mile of locomotion to perform. He makes no visible transference of his person from one place to another; and the whole change that he undergoes, lies in the transference of his affections from one set of objects to another. This journey is altogether a spiritual one; and the progress of it may be traced, not by his distance from an old country and his nearness to a new one—but by his distance from the old character, and his unceasing approximation to a new one. You see plainly where a man is going by the road upon which he travels; and if you can see as plainly what a man is seeking after, by the objects on which his heart is evidently set, then it may be as true of a Christian in our day, as it was of Abraham in reference to the promised land, that he declares plainly how heaven is the place after which he aspires—how heaven is the inheritance that he has selected and made choice of, as the joy of his heart and his portion for evermore.

In this spiritual movement, there is a something that you have to forsake—not such a forsaking as causes you to go out of the world, but such a forsaking as causes you to give up the world—so that you may truly say, though I am still with thee in presence I am no longer with thee in heart. This

implies as painful an abandonment of all that was before desirable and precious to the soul, as the patriarch had to undergo. For the rich man not to cast away his wealth, but to crucify his affections to it—for the man of eminence to become dead to the voice of praise—for the man of sensuality to abstain from every unlawful indulgence, and both to overcome and to mortify all those appetites which war against the soul—for the man of sore and irritable feelings, utterly to quench the anger and the malice and the envy that wont to agitate his heart —for the man of worldliness, in any one shape, to arouse him out of its inveteracy, so as to thwart and entirely to traverse the whole tenor of an existence, that had been devoted to gratifications which are unknown in heaven and which death will put an end to—In all these there is a departure as wide, and in every way as arduous, as is made by him who wrests himself for ever from his native land—a moral transition from one great principle to another, where there is a surrender and a work of separation as violent, as it is possible to conceive in any personal transition from one place to another —a resistance to the solicitations of nature's tenderness and nature's urgency, just as hard to be gone through, as is that parting scene where the resolved missionary has to tear himself away from the embraces of weeping relatives; and set forth from his parents' and his sister's home on an unknown pilgrimage, uncheered by the hope, nay steeled against the wish or the purpose of returning to it.

But it were not possible to make a renunciation so mighty, for no positive object either of desire

or of endeavour. It does not lie with the heart of man, to forego an old attachment but by the superior power of a new one. He will not force himself away from a scene peopled with delights, for the mere sake of entering on a scene of desolation. It was doubtless a day of gloom to the mind of Abraham, when he bade his long and last adieu to the place of his fathers. But he was not driven to such an exile; he was lured to it by the prospect of another day, which he saw afar off and was glad. And, in like manner, when a Christian is drawn in affection from the world, he is still drawn by the cords of love and the bonds of a man. He is not told to cease his affections from the things that are beneath, without the exhibition of objects better and lovelier than those he is bidden to relinquish, and without being told to set his affections on the things that are above. And there he may behold by faith Christ sitting at the right hand of God; and with an eye of tender solicitude looking towards the world which He died to save; and welcoming every applicant to that fountain of mercy which He Himself has opened; and rejoicing, most sincerely rejoicing, over the approaches to it of every new spiritual patient—(for how is it else that the cause of salvation can be carried forward, a cause on the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set;)—and at the same time demonstrating by His word and example and Spirit, that the way on which the ransomed of the Lord pass over is a way of holiness—Thus binding every follower of His to the righteousness which He Himself loves, and withdrawing them from the iniquity which He

hateth; and from that beautiful sanctuary which He irradiates by his presence, causing the purity as well as the peace of the upper regions to descend on the soul of the believer. In the heart of every believer there is love to Christ—love to Him for what He is, and therefore admiration of all the graces by which He is adorned. And such is the moral influence of this feeling, that it causes a reflection of these very graces on his own person; and he longs for the society where the alone perfect exhibition of them is to be found; and the way in which he plainly declares himself to be seeking towards it, is by growing every day in the taste and in the acquisition of its moral excellence. Gratitude to Christ seeks to gratify Christ. Love impels to the keeping of His commandments; and following the impulse of these new desires, and labouring in the prosecution of these new interests, does the disciple bespeak the great movement that he has made from that earth which he no longer cleaves to, to that heaven whither all his wishes and all his efforts are continually tending.

Before we conclude, let us offer two remarks, which may serve to explain the precept of laying up treasure in heaven—as it is by our treasure being there, that our heart will be there; and out of the abundance of a heart, so set and so situated, will there come forth such doings as shall declare plainly that we seek a country, which lies on the distance that is on the other side of the grave.

The first way in which we grow in the heavenly riches, is to grow in a heavenly relish for the enjoyments that await us there. To be in heaven

without such a relish, were like the possession of an ample fortune, without health or taste or appetite for any one gratification which it can purchase. It is only by cultivating the musical talent, that you can add to the rapture of the next musical entertainment; and it is only by increasing the spiritual habit of the soul, that you fit the man for breathing with kindred delight in that great spiritual element which composes the air of paradise. It is thus that every addition made to the purity of your character, will render more exquisite your delight in seeing God. Every addition made to the benevolence of your heart, will cause it more joyfully to respond to each note of happiness, which is heard to arise from among the choirs and the companies of the celestial. Every addition made to your piety here, will the more heighten your seraphic elevation in that place, where the glories of the Divinity will be expanded visibly before you. Every addition made to the intenseness and constancy of your love to the Saviour, will quicken the more your heart-felt ecstacy as you join in the song of eternal glory to Him, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood. There are two ways in which you may become happier after death, either by obtaining an outwardly better heaven, or by obtaining an inwardly better heart for the enjoyment of it. But there is only one heaven—with a gradation of felicity there, from the variety which obtains in the character and capacity of those who live in it. And thus it is, that though the righteous are to shine as stars, yet it will be as one star differing from another in glory. And thus

it is, that you lay up treasure in heaven by an assiduous cultivation of the personal virtues upon earth; and each of these virtues is like another jewel in the crown which is to encircle you; and the man who has got the true heavenly taste, is never satisfied with his present acquisitions, but like Paul he forgets the things that are behind, because there is still a higher eminence before him which he labours to attain: And hence his unceasing diligence to be found without spot and blemish against the day of Christ—labouring after all moral and spiritual perfection; and, with this as the high aim of his existence to which he subordinates every other, declaring plainly that he is in quest of an object which places him far beyond the general pursuits or sympathies of the world.

But secondly, the happiness of heaven is not merely the result of a meetness between its comforts and your character—it is also in part conferred upon you, in the shape of a reward for service. It is given as a return for your good deeds—like wages for work—or payment for a performance, that you have rendered at the will or bidding of a superior. There is at the same time a strong agreement between this way of it, and the former. A series of benevolent actions strengthens the principle of benevolence; and makes you therefore personally more alive to all the delight, that is ever circulating in a region of benevolence. And a series of successful conflicts with the pollutions of the world, strengthens the habit of purity; and makes you partake more largely of the divine nature, and to enjoy with fresher and livelier sen-

sation the ethereal purity that encompasses the divine throne. But in addition to this, there seems to be a boon conferred upon the righteous, specifically and formally as a reward for their distinct services. And thus it is that he who giveth to the poor, will, not only be happier in heaven, on account of the finer and stronger and readier sympathies of kindness that he bears with him from earth. But there will be an actual payment made to him like that of an account with interest, because by giving to the poor he lendeth to the Lord. And in like manner, he who giveth a disciple a cup of cold water shall not lose his reward. And the rich are said to lay up in store for themselves against the time to come, by being rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. And alms done in secret shall be rewarded openly. And prayers done in secret in the same way. And on the day of judgment, there will be a specific investigation made of specific deeds of charity; and you will be dealt with according to the principle and amount of them—All proving that by every act of obedience to the will of Christ, you lay up treasure in heaven, and so become richer towards God; and how plainly therefore you may declare that you are seeking after a place among His mansions, simply by a studious and pains-taking conformity to his will—by being stedfast and immoveable and always abounding in the work of the Lord—forasmuch as you know that your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

And to meet the alarms of orthodoxy upon this

subject, let it be remarked, that, though there is no rewardableness in good works under the legal economy, there is under the gospel economy. The law ministers condemnation, and nothing else; and, to flee from its penalties, do we take refuge with the offered Mediator. It is with Him now that we have to do; and while it is in His merit alone that we find a righteousness commensurate to the truth and holiness of the Godhead, to Him do we at the same time concede a right to all our time and to all our services. And this is what He actually claims; and deals out the tokens of His approbation to those who submit themselves; and, as the father of a family has his rewards and his chastisements, so has He; and thus, though redeemed from the curse of the law, we are yet not without law to God because under the law to Christ; and all that is done unto Him is treasured up in His remembrance, and will be brought out in the great day of manifestation, as the proofs of our faith and of our faithfulness—So that it is by unwearied assiduity in His service, by living not to our own will but to His, by abounding in the fruits of that righteousness which He has prescribed to all His disciples —it is thus we shall declare plainly that we seek a country, that we seek the welcome of the judgment-seat, that we seek to enter into the joy of our Lord.

Let us entreat you to lay all this to your consciences. Are you or are you not seeking a country? Many of you are quite familiar with the satisfaction that is felt, when stock is on the increase; when bills and title-deeds of property come abun-

dantly into your possession; and you can read in such documents as these, the authentic vouchers of the wealth that perisheth. Are you as familiar, or rather are you not altogether strange, to the satisfaction which springs from the consciousness of a treasure in heaven—from such an examination of self, as proves you to be sealed by the Spirit of God for an inheritance that never fades—from the account of such virtues and the perusal of such characters upon your person, as bespeak you to be a new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord? Tell us upon your honesty, ye hearers, whether the whole set of your habits and affections is more upon the acquirement of the first or the second kind of property? More upon the money which purchaseth all things, that serve to build or to embellish our abode upon earth; or upon the substance that so endureth as to be of worth in heaven, and to serve for the wear of eternity? And what is the kind of disaster which goes nearest to overwhelm you? Is it the sweep of resistless bankruptcy, that demolishes your fairest prospects in time? Or is it the urgency of some violent and unlooked for temptation, that has well nigh overthrown all those hopes of a blissful immortality, which rest on the basis of experience? O be at length convinced of nature's folly and nature's miscalculation. Let not these seasons which pass in sure and rapid flight over your heads, speak to you in vain. Let the silent eloquence of friends, who, now tombed in their sepulchres, and who in their little day laughed as loudly and thronged as busily for this world's interests as yourselves—let it touch and

solemnize you. And O, though it be a thought of horror—yet if possible to snatch survivors from the gulph of perdition, let us not withhold it—Just think of some such acquaintance—who toiled through life his unwearied round of earthliness, and with all the earthliness of his soul unbroken breathed his last—if from the place of despair he now occupies, he looks back on the land of opportunity and sends forth the bitter and unfruitful longings of his heart for one little hour upon its borders, that he may have another call to repent and another chance for eternity—what he never can obtain you still possess. The gate of Christ's Mediatorship to you is open. The road of access to that fountain which is for sin and uncleanness, is free and open. That redemption which is through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, is held out to every creature who now hears us; and all the portals of reconciliation with the God whom you have offended, are most widely and welcomely open. The farm, and the merchandise, and the domestic cares or the domestic comforts, may so engross the soul, and deafen all its organs of communication—that the voice of the preacher shall be unheeded when he calls you to turn to Christ from your iniquities; and, for the sake of the world that is future, to renounce the present one. But it is his part to preach though at a venture. And he who hath ears to hear, let him hear—that breaking forth from the entanglements of sense, he may turn his path through life into a holy pilgrimage, and so declare plainly that he is seeking a country.

SERMON XV.

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE INCIPIENT DUTIES, AND THE SUBSEQUENT EXPERIENCES OF A CHRISTIAN.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."—LUKE xxiv. 49.

YOU are aware that there was an interval of forty days, between our Saviour's resurrection from the grave and His ascension into heaven—that during that time, He appeared upon various occasions and at various places to his disciples—that among others, He met them as far from Jerusalem as Galilee, whither they had gone, but whence it behoved them to return that they might witness His ascension; for this great event was to take place in the very neighbourhood of the Jewish metropolis; and thither it was appointed that the apostles should repair; and there it was commanded them to wait, till, in the language of our text, "they were endued with a power from on high"—and, as it is expressed in the book of Acts, they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, that is, to wait for a baptism from heaven, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days after. There was a scrupulous obedience rendered by the apos-

tles to the commandment. They did travel from Galilee to Jerusalem. They returned there from the mount of ascension; and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication even till the promise came upon them, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We hold this narrative, short as it is, and consisting of very few steps, to be replete with soundest instruction; and which, in the further prosecution of this discourse, we shall endeavour to unfold and apply, in some of its leading particulars.

I. By the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were endued with a power, which of course they had not previous to that visitation. "Ye shall receive power," our Saviour said, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." It was a power which they had not, then, before that the Holy Ghost was come upon them. But you will observe that even when destitute of this power, they had a part to act in regard to it; and were the subjects of a precept, that stood connected with the high and heavenly inspiration which was afterwards to descend upon them. There was a plain and practicable bidding laid upon them, which was, to return to Jerusalem and to wait there. They had power for doing this, though they had not yet the power that was to come upon them after doing this. There was a power in their feet, that carried them to the place of assignation. There was a power in their wills, that kept them there, and made them resist the movement of any inclination that might have seduced them

away from it. There were certain common powers and faculties, which they had along with other men; and by the obediently putting forth of which, in the way that was laid upon them by the authority of the Saviour, they were afterwards endued with a power which signalized them above all other men. But meanwhile, they, in a plain way, did the plain thing that was required of them. They walked back to Jerusalem, and they stopped there—till the fulfilment of the promise, which was to be realized upon them there. Had they gone elsewhere, or tarried elsewhere, there would have been no such fulfilment. The accomplishment that came after, followed in the train of that movement which went before; and the enlargement of spirit, that came upon the apostles in the day of Pentecost, was the distinct consequence of a very plain act of obedience.

The first general process then, which our text exemplifies, is that by which the beginner is guided, from an humbler to a higher acquirement, in the course of his Christian education. It shows how the obedience of such powers as he has, can haste him onward to such larger powers and endowments as he at present has not. It shows that in the inferior stages of discipleship, there is a distinct and tangible something for him to do; and in the doing of which he is at length raised to its more elevated stages. We shall seize upon this narrative as an illustration of the very important principle, that in no part of a believer's progress, not even in the very infancy of it, and farther back than this, not even at the time when most sunk in the

unconcern of nature and of the world, is there the want of some specific and practicable thing, to which he might and ought to turn himself; and which has a bearing upon the interest of his eternity. We read of the trumpet giving a certain and an uncertain sound; and a direction which could well be understood and instantly proceeded on by the full-grown Christian, might sound most uncertainly indeed, to the hearing of him who is but a babe in the mysteries of the gospel, and still more of him who has not yet felt one desire or made one movement towards it. Yet there is a way of dealing with them too, there is a word in season for every man; and for them also, there are words which can be spoken seasonably. In that low degree both of understanding and power, which obtained among the apostles, immediately after the resurrection—the direction, given subsequently, and even by themselves in their own epistles, would not then have suited them. They would have felt the obscurity of such sayings, as, "quench not the Spirit," and "glory in the cross of Christ," and "have no confidence in the flesh," and "be dead unto the law," and "rejoice in the Holy Ghost." And so, as a high point of wisdom and delicacy, our Saviour, in the treatment of these his immediate disciples, abstained from many things at the first, and limited himself to the utterance of such things as they were able to learn. He fed them with milk, and reserved his strong meat for the manhood of their Christianity. They would have been at a loss with very many of the instructions, which were scattered over their own compositions; but

at no loss whatever, how to set about the very obvious bidding of our text—how to make use of their feet in carrying them to Jerusalem, and stedfastly to abide there, till the promised enlargement should come upon them. And there we read that they waited and they prayed, till, as the result of their own performances and God's promise together, they received that from Heaven which raised them nearer to Heaven's light, and love, and liberty; and brought them up to a far higher platform in the ascent of Christian experience.

Now the interesting question is, whether a process similar to this ever obtains in the present day. Is such still the economy of grace, that the obedience which can be accomplished by a lower degree of power, elevates the Christian disciple to a higher degree of it? Will the compliance with such humbler directions as require less of light and knowledge to understand, carry forward the teachable inquirer to more of light and knowledge than he had before? What are the movements that we on earth can perform, so as to meet the influences which are rained down upon us from heaven?—and whither shall we lead our footsteps, that we may receive of some promised enlargement? There is, it would appear, a visitation from on high, by which they who are the subjects of it, become versant in the mysteries of the faith, and have the mark impressed upon them of a very peculiar people. To them the whole doctrine and phraseology of the gospel are familiar; and many are the truths which spring from that doctrine, and are couched in that phraseology, whereof they both see

the meaning and feel the power and the preciousness. To them the trumpet giveth a certain sound, while to them who have never yet been called out of darkness into marvellous light, it may sound most uncertainly. The technicals of Christianity may fall upon their ears, like the vocables of an unknown language. The truths of Christianity may be shrouded from their mental eye, by a veil that looks most hopelessly impenetrable. They may have no sympathy, and no common intelligence, with the children of light; and the question is, whether, with the unintelligence which they have as the children of the world, any space however small can be cleared out before them, on which they might make one step in advance towards the knowledge and the faith which are unto salvation? Is there but one obvious truth on which they might lay palpable hold, and by which they may pluck all the other articles of a recondite Theology from their hiding-place?—or, rather, is there any visible path of access that can lead them to the margin, and at length introduce them within the confines of a spiritual manifestation, whereunto they have not yet been admitted? All which the Bible says of regeneration, and of the righteousness which is by faith, and of the life which is hid with Christ in God, and of walking in the Spirit, and of God's residence within them as if they were the temples which He chose to decorate and in which He loved to dwell,—these, and many other expressions to be found in the pages of the evangelical record, may be as darkly incomprehensible to them, as any cabalistic responses that were ever given forth by

the oracles of heathenism; and the question still is, whether for these men of our present generation, we can prescribe a way as plain, as that in which the apostles were bidden walk, when commanded to go to Jerusalem, and there to wait till they were endued with power from on high.

Our general answer to this question is, that, just as Jerusalem was assigned to the apostles, for their place of meeting with the Spirit of God, so still there are places of meeting with the same Spirit assigned for us; and just as easily as they could do as they were bidden, when they went to their prescribed post, so can we do the bidding to repair to ours; that still there lies a distinct call, even upon the uninitiated, who are afar off from the gospel, as well as upon those babes in Christ who are nigh unto its fuller revelations; that still, there is a progression, by which all may come from the acts of a humbler to the powers and the spiritual gifts of a higher obedience; that still there are movements which might be done by us on earth, and by which the earthliest of us all may come within the limits of that influence which falls on certain gracious places in a descending ministration from heaven,—That so all are left without excuse; and will not have to allege on the day of reckoning, at least of every neglected call which has been brought to their door, how, in each instance, it was too hard and too high for them—that their consciences through life, have been repeatedly plied with the obligation of duties as clear as they were urgent and imperative; and to the performance of which, if they had not been wanting

to themselves, God would not have been wanting with the aids of his grace, to carry onward their education for heaven—that, in short, for all there is a path which is plain, and a sound which is certain and intelligible,—that many, very many things, are laid upon us, which bear on our future and everlasting interests, the neglect of which can be traced distinctly, not to the want either of power or of understanding, but to the want of inclination—that for these at least we are clearly and fully responsible; and because of these it will be found, not of the not able but of the not willing, that God has wiped His hands of every one of them, and they have themselves to blame for the undoing of their eternity.

But to be more specific. One assigned place of meeting between man and the Spirit of God, is the word of God. In like manner as their ordinary and natural powers took the apostles to Jerusalem, and kept them there—so our natural faculties will avail us so far when put forth upon the Bible. The Bible may be to us, what Jerusalem was to them. We can at least place it before us; and bind ourselves over to the perusal of it; and direct our eye upon its pages; and give to it the same strenuousness of attention and of thought, that we give to any other composition; and press the understanding, and the memory, and the conscience, and all the other gifts and sensibilities that are within us, into the service of being rightly informed and rightly impressed by it: And this we can persevere in many days, even as the disciples of our Lord tarried for days at the post which was

prescribed to them. The Bible is the post prescribed to us. And there is just one thing more to be added, in order to complete the resemblance between the two cases. They waited at Jerusalem, and we are farther informed that they prayed. The promise of God that they should have the Holy Ghost, did not it would appear supersede, but stimulate their prayers for its accomplishment. Instead of causing them to give up supplication, it suggested a topic for it. And so let us, to the forth-putting of all the light and strength which we actually have, add our supplications for more. More especially to the earnest heed which we give unto the Bible, let us add our earnest entreaties that God would open our eyes, to behold the marvellous things which be contained in it—let the diligence wherewith we ply all its various passages, be joined with devotion for a blessing upon the exercise—let us look unto the word, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, and look up unto Him, at the bidding alone of whose voice, all the darkness can be dissipated—And just as the first Christians kept by Jerusalem, and in the earnest expectation there of a coming enlargement—So ought we to keep by the Bible, and continue to give earnest heed unto the word of its prophecy, until (to use the very language of the apostle Peter), until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

There is a peculiar fitness in the Bible, as a place of meeting between God's Spirit and man's spirit. It is the very place, through which a conveyance from the one descends upon the other.

There is no other inspiration to be expected now-a-days, than simply the word of God being made clear and impressive to us. When the Holy Ghost speaks to us, He makes use of no other vocables than the words of Scripture. When He illuminates the soul, it is by a lustre reflected upon it from the pages of Scripture. When He bears upon the conscience, it is with the urgency of some truth or some moral lesson, the whole letter and expression of which are to be found in the Scripture. He does not operate on the mind of man, but by putting Himself into contact with the Scripture. And man ought not to look for this operation, but by just, on the other hand, bringing himself into contact with this said Scripture. The Bible, ye hearers, the Bible is the place of concourse between the celestial influence from above, and the terrestrial subject that is below—the common ground on which the two parties hold their conference the one with the other, and where the earnestness of man meets with the visitation of that God who rewards them who seek Him diligently. It is here, if any where, that if we draw near unto God, God will draw near unto us. This is the field where the treasure lieth hid, to find which you must dig up and down upon it; and if you should not have succeeded, we have no other direction to give, than that you must just dig over again. It is in the perusal and the re-perusal of Scripture, that you can obtain and make sure of the pearl of great price; and the truth, and the power, and the enlargement which you are in quest of, are all embosomed there. The word is the intermedium

between God and man; and it is through it, and it only, that the light of inspiration is given. You are at your post, when, in the act of reading God's word, you may be said to place yourselves beside that intermedium, and there to listen for that voice of efficacy, which might transform you into a new creature. You may have to wait; but there is every assurance that no honest inquirer shall have to wait in vain: and we believe it to be unexcepted, in the whole history of the Church, that, wherever there has been a desirous and a devoted attendance upon the word, there the demonstration of the Spirit has been added to it.

Is there any here present, who, still a stranger to the light and liberty of the gospel, has to complain that long and wearily he has knocked at a door which he cannot open? Perhaps he may have been reading without prayer, as many do, who, acquitting themselves of their daily chapter, drivel out their time at a formal and fruitless task-work. Then he is like what the apostles would have been, had they gone to Jerusalem, but sent up no supplication to heaven there. Or perhaps, under a sense of darkness and discomfort, he may have been praying for enlargement out of the straightening which oppresses him; but not looking to the Bible as the only channel through which the light of life is to flow in upon his soul, as the appointed place where the answer is to come, he may just have fared as the apostles would have done, had they not followed the order of going to Jerusalem; but at some other part than that which was prescribed to them, thought of making up by the

strenuousness of their devotions for their palpable act of disobedience. You are on the one hand bidden to search the Scriptures, and on the other hand to ask for the Spirit. Without the one, you will never find, in their power and in their preciousness, the truths which lie deposited in the other. Still these truths are to be gotten at a certain and specified place; and if away from the place, the help of the Spirit will be of no avail to you. To the apostles was offered the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem; and to you there is the offer of the same Holy Ghost, in the act of giving your diligent and desirous attendance upon the Bible. The compound direction under which you lie, is, to seek for something in a given place, where that something is to be found; and to take the aid of an able auxiliary along with you. If not at the place, you will seek in vain; and if you have not the aid you will also seek in vain. The Spirit sent forth upon the soul, is no mystic or undescribable afflatus; and all his teaching, indispensable as it is, is couched and embodied in the literalities of Scripture. You may have read, it availeth not if you do not pray; you may have prayed, it availeth not if you do not read. They are the readings and the prayers together which avail you. There are many of this careless and unthinking generation who do neither; and there be some, with whom these exercises are prosecuted apart—we do not mean apart in time, but apart as to all dependence the one upon the other. We ask you to proceed on the harmony that is between them—to knock at no other door than the door of Scripture for Heaven's inspira-

tions; and at the same time to know, that, unless Heaven be addressed by your earnest and persevering entreaties, these inspirations never will be given.

And now for those, who, to justify their irreligion, complain that a plain path hath never been set before them,—that they might have been Christians had it not been for the hieroglyphical obscurity in which Christianity is shrouded—that they have not yet made one movement towards it, because they know not where to place their next footstep, and are quite sure that they could never find their way through its points and its paradoxes. It is thus they would excuse themselves—while all the while their Bible lies unopened—while the plain question, "of what readest thou," remains unanswered—while, to solve this question, they give no time, either to perusals or to praying. And with a readable volume to lie beside them, and invite their eye upon its pages; and with the promise of that merciful Heaven which smiles so benignantly upon them, and offers to unravel for them all its mysteries—it is in the midst of such facilities as these, they will persist in their apathy, though at the very opening of that career which leads to Heaven's bliss and to Heaven's glory. It is not because the way is inaccessible, but because the spells of earth and of earthliness have bound them. They have no right to complain of a hedge across their path. It is the manacle of their own hearts' choice and nothing else, which so detains and fastens them among the treacherous delights of the world. There has been pointed out to them a

way as specific, as that which led the apostles of our Lord to Jerusalem. There has been made to them a promise as sure, as that of the power by which the apostles were endued from on high. And if during your short-lived day, you choose to give all your energies to its business and its pleasures—if in the unabated fervour wherewith ye ply your busy round among the interests and gratifications of sense, you are scarcely, if ever, arrested a single hour for one pause or one preparation of seriousness—The great searcher of hearts will Himself not only pronounce but vindicate your doom, when He tells from the judgment-seat, of the Bible that He sent and the Spirit that he offered to you.

Nor is it enough to vindicate your unconcern, that the evidence for this Bible is still unseen by you—that you have yet met with nothing to overpower you into the conviction of its truth—that, for aught you know, it may be the record of a base and unprincipled imposture, instead of an authentic and authoritative message from the upper sanctuary. The Bible may not stand forth in such characters of certainty, as to compel your instantaneous belief; and yet stand forth in such characters of likelihood, as to challenge your instant and most serious inquiry. We do not require of you to believe in the absence of proof; but we require of you to peruse and to ponder and to investigate, in the midst of many semblances and many probabilities. We do not affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, you will see as much as to force the whole system of its doctrines and articles at once into

your creed; but we affirm, that, on your very first look at Christianity, there appears as much on its forehead as should constrain your candid and respectful attention to it. It is not our demand, that you should believe without inquiry; but it is our demand that you should not reject without inquiry. We do not say there is enough in and about the Bible, to dogmatise you into the sudden assurance of its infallibility; but we say, that, in and about this Bible, there is enough to rivet your regards, and rebuke away all your heedlessness. How, I would ask, have you disposed of the history of its miracles? And how of that magnificent train of prophecy, that so accords with the general march and movement of our world? How have you contrived to resist the appeal, which is made in behalf of Scripture, by the existence of the Jews as a separate and monumental nation? Or have you so mastered the records of other times, as to warrant your summary rejection of a volume, that so many of the wise and the good in all ages have revered? Or have you looked into its pages; and, putting your hand upon your bosom, can you honestly say, that you have discovered no characters of truth and of sacredness; and that you have met with no one presumption on its side, either in the loftiness of its morality, or its searching discernment into the human spirit? Still we do not ask your faith, till the evidences of its truth have been manifested; but we ask your faithful and assiduous inquiries, till you have the manifested evidence of its falsehood. We beg you not to look so safe and so satisfied, in your habitual neglect of this religion, as if imposture were plainly

and palpably written on the face of it: And we put the question—whether, with nothing to lose if it be false, and every thing to lose if it be true, you would hazard one earthly interest that belongs to you, in the way that the contemners of the gospel of Jesus Christ have staked the fortune of their eternity? O, they have done repeated violence, even to the light and the voice of nature, in their treatment of Christianity; and when visited, as they have sometimes been, with the suspicion that they are wrong, their own natural conscience hath testified against them. The Bible, with its many probabilities that should urge them to begin the investigation, and its many proofs that would have met and multiplied upon them ere they had gotten to the end of it—this Bible when opened in the day of reckoning, will be their coming witness; and will furnish against them many a clear principle of condemnation. He who ponders the heart, and hath an eye upon all its secrets, will bring out the lurking unfairness to the light of day—will uncover the moral perversity that hung at the bottom of it all—will make it clear to every looker-on, that never in one instance, has a thorough earnestness after truth, missed of evidence enough for all the truth which is unto salvation; that if any did not see, it was because they did not seek; that if strangers to the light, it was because they shut their eyes against it; that if they abode in darkness, it was because they loved the darkness and chose to abide in it. It is not that they had no proof for the ways of God; but that they had no pleasure in these ways—not that there was a want of har-

monious and convincing doctrine on His part, but a want on theirs of any desire after it: And this is their condemnation, that their desires were away from heaven and bent upon earth—that, whatever the decencies of their outer man, these deeds of the inner man were evil.

We have expatiated so long on this one illustration wherewith our text has furnished us, that not enough of time is left, for other and similar illustrations. The general principle of them all is, that we creatures on earth, are not left unbidden and untold of some one movement that each of us can make; and in the making of which, we shall meet, if we will, some farther light and influence from heaven. The apostles could not take the celestial flight of following the Lord Jesus Christ in the air; but they could at least perform the terrestrial motion of a walk to Jerusalem—and there it was that a power and an enlargement from above came upon them. We cannot, in the words of Paul, we cannot ascend up on high, and thence bring down the light of God's sanctuary upon our soul—We cannot descend into the deep, and thence bring up any secret thing from its unfathomable recesses; but we can at least go to the word which is nigh unto us, and from the Spirit through the medium of the word, get all that is needful of Heaven's power and Heaven's illumination. The Bible stands to us, in place of Jerusalem to the first disciples; and many other are the ordinances of God, each of which may be regarded in the light of a waiting-post—where if we do some palpable things that lie within the compass of human hands,

and have the desire which should be felt in sincerity and should issue in prayers from human hearts, God will not fail of the grace and the loving-kindness, that He has promised to all who seek Him diligently. This view of the matter, stamps a peculiar and characteristic value, on all that might be termed the ordinances of religion. They are such things as man can do in the letter of them; and in the doing of which, with hearts of desire, and hands of diligence, God will pour forth of the Spirit upon them. They offer precisely those occasions, in which God and man meet as fellow-workers towards the same end; when without the co-operation of the one nothing will be given, and without the co-operation of the other nothing will be received. The Sabbath is just such an ordinance; for you can then rest, and abstain from all earthly business, and read books of sacredness, and give your presence to the solemn assembly, and perform certain movements which may be said to be terrestrial, and put yourself into certain attitudes which are also terrestrial; and to all which done by you below, if you are only prompted by a seeking heart, a celestial virtue from above will be given. In the opinion of some, the table of the Lord has a converting as well as a confirming efficacy; and they will look on the Sacrament of the Supper as such another ordinance. And most certain it is, that the church whither you repair in obedience to the precept of "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," is precisely such an ordinance. This is a Jerusalem to which you are bidden as the place of your weekly resort; and you are at

an assigned post, when your feet stand within its gates. Thither do the worshippers of the Lord go up, unto the testimony of Jesus; and there do they give thanks at the remembrance of His name. Where two or three are met together in that name, there He is in the midst of you. This is one of the chosen spots which He loves to bless and to hallow; and it is here of all other places, where the presence of man meets with the promise of God. Without attendance upon Church, you may fare as the apostles would have done, had they not waited at Jerusalem; and still if it is but the attendance of heartless and hackneyed formality, you may fare even as they would have done, had they waited at Jerusalem, but had not prayed. To the duteous regularity of your presence, add the devoutness of your prayers; and here too living water will descend, and sons and daughters will be turned unto righteousness.

Some there are who despise the ordinances. They have no right to imagine that the Spirit will be theirs. Others there are who rest upon the ordinances; and to them the Spirit will be as little given. It is only to them who are found at the prescribed place upon earth, that we can expect the counterpart promises of heaven to be fulfilled. But then they must have a dependence and a desire towards the promises—And so while we would exact from you an assiduous church-going—we would bid you look up assiduously to that quarter whence alone the blessing and the efficacy are to come.

SERMON XVI.

CONNECTION BETWEEN FAITH AND PEACE.

" Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."—ROMANS v. 1.

It is, in the first place, evident, that no man can have true faith in God, whose faith does not extend to the whole of God's testimony. If He choose to deliver more than one intimation, we cannot be said to put faith in Him—unless we give credit, not to one only, but to all His intimations. And this of necessity conducts us to the inference, that, if faith attach itself only to a few particulars of God's communication; or if certain portions of Scripture be dwelt upon with a warm and special satisfaction, while other portions are entertained with coldness, or resisted in the plain and obvious meaning of them by an overstretched application of the favourite doctrine—Or, in other words, if the faith be partial, it is not real.

But, in the second place, it is a very possible thing, that a man may possess a general belief in God's testimony, without directing a strenuous attention, or bestowing a fixed and steady regard, on any one of its particulars. He may vaguely admit the trueness of all; and yet not actually believe the trueness of any. He may be able to demonstrate, how the abuses of one doctrine

are restrained by the faithful application of another doctrine; and that therefore any such abuses can never be chargeable on the true faith which embraces both, but only on the spurious faith which has adopted the one while it has rejected the other. And yet all the while he may just have as little of the true faith, as the man whose error he has completely demolished by the power of his argument. He may be quite triumphant in his reasoning, when he vindicates justifying faith from the imputation of Antinomianism. But while he thus reasons, and incontrovertibly too, about the relation and the influence and the bearing of the several doctrines of Christianity on each other, each individual doctrine may of itself have failed to make its distinct lodgement in his understanding, and its distinct impression upon his heart. The whole matter may yet have come to him in word only, and not in power; and the words or terms which he employs, and are expressive of the doctrine in question, may be no more than the symbols made use of in a logical process, which is conducted by him at the same time with the skill and the soundness of a logic that is quite unexceptionable; and thus the whole matter may come to him, both in word and in argumentation, and yet not come in power. On every subject, indeed, there is a great danger of the mind satisfying itself with rapidly-sketched generalities, without appropriating in detail their several and distinct truths. In the case of Christianity, this danger is fearfully aggravated—where one may have a literal discernment of its truths, without a saving and a spiritual discernment of them. Let us therefore be careful to

attend to each of them severally and particularly; and, instead of counting it enough that we bestow one comprehensive glance upon the whole—let us feel that if we give not earnest heed to each of the things that we read in this book, we neglect the great salvation that is unfolded in it.

He who has a true faith, will admit all the known articles of Christianity into his belief; and he will give his earnest endeavour to the object of ascertaining these articles; and he will dwell at distinct times distinctly upon each of them; and this faith of his, while it embraces all, will also single out each as a separate object of attention; and the business of each will be pressed home on occasions of need upon the understanding and the heart. And here it is altogether worthy of remark, that, though faith includes as the object of it the whole testimony of God, yet it is by faith exercising itself on each portion of that testimony, that the influence or the benefit of that portion is realised to the believer. If he merely cast a summary look at the whole, even though it be a look of acquiescence, he may still miss every distinct benefit of that salvation which is unto all and upon all who believe. He may profess an acquiescence in the whole, and yet be a stranger to the habit of acting faith in any particular. Now it is by the distinct acting of his faith in some particular of the divine testimony, that a particular promise is fulfilled to him; or a particular privilege made good to him; or a particular necessity met and relieved. When our Saviour was asked to cure a man in the gospels, He did not demand of him at the time whether he believed that

Christ was able to do all things—but whether he believed that He was able to do this thing; and according to his belief so was the thing done unto him. When we ask for wisdom, we are required to ask it in faith; and the object of the faith is that God giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. When we ask for the Spirit, the belief that bringeth down a fulfilment of our petition, is the belief that God giveth His Spirit to them who ask it. When we obtain forgiveness through faith, it is specifically stated in the Bible, that it is through faith in the blood of Christ. Each truth of Christianity forms a distinct topic for the exercise of faith; and it is when the faith so exercises itself, that the good corresponding to that truth is realised to the believer. Doubtless, some of these truths have a more pervading influence over the range of Christian contemplation; but an inquirer may lose himself in the comprehensiveness of his views. He may so generalize his survey, as to overlook particulars. It is true that a real faith will have room for all that is known to be of divine attestation. But each distinct attestation will be entertained, will be dwelt upon, will be turned to its appropriate use, will be viewed in its connection with the others; and, so far from excluding these others, the attention and the trust and the interest which have been attached to this one, will form the best guarantee for all of them properly exercising the mind, and properly influencing the conduct of the believer.

And if there be one doctrine of more primary and pervading importance than another, it is that which relates to the question of our justification before God.

Disguise it as he will, there is not a rational man who feels himself on terms of solid confidence, with the Being who made and who sustains him. There is not one of them who can look God fully and fearlessly in the face, and say of Him that He is my friend. There is a lurking suspicion about Him, in virtue of which the creature shrinks from the Creator, and flies away from the thought of Him, to such perishable vanities as may grant him temporary relief or occupation. Conceive his intercourse with the visible world to be in some way suspended, and the invisible God to draw near by some convincing manifestation; and he would not feel at ease or comfort in his presence. Let the feeling be as deep and inexplicable as it may, still is terror at God, the real and the powerful and the constant feeling of nature. As inferior animals flee from the presence of man, even though they know not whether it be friendship or hostility that is in his bosom—so there is in man the same instinctive dread of the Deity. And there is doubtless a foundation for it. There is the consciousness of guilt. There is the uncontrollable sentiment of a power, which can carry all its purposes into execution, and which he has done nothing and can do nothing to propitiate. There is the haunting idea of a great and righteous Monarch, who can summon all creation into His presence, and sweep all iniquity and whatsoever offendeth away from Him. The sinner who has his mind darkened, as well as his heart alienated from God, may not clearly perceive the connection between his sin and his fearfulness. It may be as much of a sensitive, as it is of an intelligent recoil,

from the great Lawgiver. But is not this saying enough for the wretchedness of his condition, that, to make it tolerable, God must not be thought of, but forgotten; and that, to secure him ease, he must so surround himself by the idolatry of sense, as to intercept from the eye of his mind that unseen Spirit, from whence he took his origin; and that, to enjoy time without disturbance, he must shut out the view of an approaching eternity; and that he cannot brave the realities which are before him and around him, but must bury his intoxicated soul in delusion that he may gain the respite of his present transitory life, from a state of darkness and dreariness and despair? This is the real and universal way in which Humanity, when awake to her own condition, stands moved with reference to God. It is a state of fear, and a state of antipathy. The question may be shunned and lie dormant, for months and for years, amongst those numberless expedients of diversion, by which the God of this world confirms the empire of deceitfulness over his infatuated victims. But if ever it be fairly looked to, such is the actual revolt of man from the God who formed him. And the death which carries his disembodied spirit to the God who gave it; and the judgment which brings the piercing eye of omniscience, upon all the secrecies of his heart and history; and the dissolution of the present system of things, in which he now screens himself from the Deity as in a hiding-place: and the immortality, throughout the whole of which he conceives that there will be no intervening materialism to stand between himself and the Being with whom he has

to do—all these suggest the idea of God and man being brought into nearer or more visible contact with each other; and let Nature say herself, whether she feels more attracted or repelled by it—let her answer, whether the prospect of these things look inviting or formidable to her eye: And is it not clear that God is felt by man as an enemy, if every event by which man is brought nearer to God is thus associated with the anticipations and the images of terror?

In these circumstances, a restoration to the divine favour must be a question as big with interest to man, as the question of a passage from death unto life. It stands identified with the main object of his existence. If it remain unsettled, all theology is superfluous, and but the mockery of a heartless speculation. That man should seize upon this as a preliminary question, and give to it his first and his foremost earnestness, is just saying that man, after he has become an inquirer into the things of God, still cannot escape from the urgency of the principle of self-preservation. Let us cease to wonder, then, that the topic of acceptance with God should have so exercised the minds of the men of all ages; or that they should have directed their longing attention to a matter so important, and at the same time so personal, as that turning point, at which God, from the enemy of a restless and terrified sinner, becometh his friend.

But the question, how shall God from the enemy of man become his friend, just resolves itself into the question, how shall man be justified before God? Had man rendered a full obedience, it would

not have been a merciful but a righteous thing for God, to have favoured and cherished and rewarded him. But man has not rendered this obedience; and while therefore it is a merciful thing for God to take him into acceptance, let us beware of thinking that this is done in such a way, as not to make it a righteous thing also. If done in the latter case, it must be as righteous a proceeding, as it would have been if done in the former case. There may be a special putting forth of one attribute, in this dispensation of favour to the guilty —but not to the disparagement, or the letting down, of another attribute. The character of the Deity, we may be assured, will sustain no mutilation by any one act in the moral administration of the Deity; and unless the truth and the holiness and the justice and the other perfections of God give their full consent to the exercise of His mercy, then the exercise of His mercy is impossible. Accordingly when we read, in the New Testament, of that salvation which is unto the sinner—this is spoken of as done for him by granting him a righteousness, as well as by granting him the remission of his sins. He is, somehow or other, invested with a righteousness, which renders it a just thing in God to justify him. There is no man, we believe, who is visited with a real and a practical earnestness in the work of seeking after God, who will ever feel himself in grounded and settled peace, on the imagination of a bare act of mercy in his behalf. He will not obtain a secure and firm repose on any such foundation—and will thus in spite of himself, offer an involuntary homage to the holy

and inflexible attributes of the Godhead. He will seek for a something which he might render up unto those attributes, and by which he might make them propitious to himself; and therefore it is always the question of longing restless and dissatisfied nature,—"Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord and bow myself unto the most high God?"

In the prosecution of the following discourse let us endeavour, in the first place, to explain the meaning of the term justify—in the second place, to show how it is that we are justified by faith—in the third place, how it is that by this faith we have peace with God—and lastly point your attention more particularly to Jesus Christ, as the medium of conveyance—through which we obtain so inestimable a blessing. We may then conclude with a few such observations as the whole topic is fitted to suggest.

To justify a man, is sometimes used in the sense, of to vindicate him from the charge of having done that which is evil. If he be made the subject of a criminal imputation, of which you succeed in proving him to be clear, you justify him from that imputation. If something be laid to his charge, and you undertake his defence and make out his innocence, you justify him from the charge. It certainly is oftener understood in the sense—to make out his innocence of what is wrong—than to make out his pretension to what is positively righteous. So that the word "to justify," in its common acceptation, is not so comprehensive of meaning as the word to vindicate. You may justify a man of an alleged

transgression, so as to ward off from his person the punishment that is annexed to it. In so doing you certainly vindicate his innocence. But the office of vindicating may be carried farther than to this negative performance. You may also vindicate a man's positive title to the reward, that is annexed to a particular service, or a particular act of laborious obedience and virtue. By the one office you prevent the threatened penalty from falling upon his head. By the other you make clear his title, and obtain the investiture of his person with the promised reward.

So that the meaning of the term to justify in this verse, deviates in two particulars from the term in its common and general acceptation. In the first place we cannot prove any man to have been personally clear of those offences, which constitute him a sinner at the law of God. We cannot overturn the fact, of his having been a sinner throughout the whole of his past history; and that he is therefore in himself the subject of a righteous condemnation. Neither can we overturn the fact, of his being a sinner still; and that therefore if God were now to set up his law with its proclaimed sanctions in judgment over him, He, under this examination also, would reiterate upon him the sentence of condemnation. The whole gospel proceeds upon the fact, that in man himself there is no righteousness before God; and yet it unfolds to us the possibility of man being righteously made the subject of acceptance and reward. Man is not a righteous person; and yet, in some way or other, it can be made a just thing to treat him as a righteous person—not merely

a merciful, not merely a generous, not merely a compassionate thing, but positively a just thing to admit him into the rewards of righteousness. In ordinary language, to justify a man, is to make out for him a plea of innocence, grounded on the facts of his own personal history; and when such a plea is made out, there is made out along with it a right in his favour to have the penalty or the chastisement remitted to him. To justify a man, in the evangelical sense of the term, we cannot possibly make out a plea grounded on the fact of his own personal innocence; but still a plea is found, in virtue of which justice requires that he should be treated as an innocent person. He cannot be so justified, as that it were a just thing to say of him —he has acquitted himself throughout the whole of his past life, and is now acquitting himself, as a holy righteous and innocent person—But he can be so justified, as that it should become a just thing to treat him, as if he ever had been, and still were, a righteous holy and innocent person. But while we thus advert to the distinction between justification in the gospel sense of it, and the same term in its common acceptation; let us never at the same time forget, that the justification of the gospel is totally distinct from a simple ministration of favour and forgiveness to the guilty. The benefit which a sinner receives, who is simply forgiven, is a matter of pure kindness. The benefit which the same sinner receives, in consequence of being justified, is a matter of desert. He may not deserve the benefit in his own person. The desert may not be his own. He may not have acquired a title

to the benefit by any self-exertion; but it is of importance to remark that a title, he, in some way or other, has gotten. By the gospel, the same good-will, and the same happiness, which is the fruit of that good-will, are conferred upon the sinner, that would have been conferred upon him, had he, instead of a sinner, been perfect in all the duties and in all the services of loyalty. But the great peculiarity of the gospel lies in this, that, before it forgives the sinner, it, in some way or other, invests him with a claim to forgiveness—before it grants him a reward, it grants him a right to it. There is a something attached to him, which renders it a righteous thing for God to treat him as a righteous person. He obtains remission and reward; but not till by being justified, he obtains a title to them. Ere the dispensation of gospel mercy can take effect, it must be made a righteous dispensation; and it is this which constitutes the great peculiarity of its character—by which both the guilty are invested with a title to that which they receive, and the Giver displays holiness and justice and truth in the ministration of His kindness to the guilty.

And let it further be observed—that, to arrive at the evangelical meaning of the term justification in its whole extent, we must understand it in the fullest sense of the word vindication. The man, who is justified, is not merely in possession of a title to have all penalties remitted to him; but he is in possession of a title to have rewards conferred upon him. God not only forbears to treat him as a subject of condemnation; but He treats him as a subject for the positive distribution of His favours.

Did the privilege stop short at the making out of a release from punishment, the sinner would be delivered from the wrath that is to come; but he might ever afterwards remain an object of indifference to the Eternal. But the transition he makes by being justified, is far wider than this. The man from an object of wrath, becomes an object of fatherly affection. He is rescued from a fearful looking for of judgment; and he becomes an heir and an expectant of promise. He obtains something more than a deed of acquittal. He obtains a deed of widest and most abundant conveyance; and, instead of having a midway place assigned to him between hell and heaven, the right he acquires is so comprehensive, as to secure for him, by one and the same charter, a rescue from the wretchedness of the one, and a translation into the bright glories and felicities of the other.

Now it may be thought, that, to change the prospect of sinners from a place of torment to a place of blessedness and triumph—nothing more is necessary than a simple putting forth of divine tenderness, and a simple manifestation of the divine will. But to give these sinners, not merely a permission but a right to the tree of life—to clear away all the incapacity which attached to their state of guilt—to crown with honour the transgressors of the law, and at the same time to magnify the law itself—to vest with the title-deeds of a full and finished obedience, those, who, from the fulfilment of that obedience, had fallen so utterly away—to devise for them such a path of transference from the one place to the other, that mercy could

not only lift her song of gratulation; but justice, stern vindictive incommutable justice, could shield and secure their entrance to the city which hath foundations—for God to welcome them into His own presence, not in the capacity of forgiven men, in whose behalf He had recalled the truth of His own denunciations, but in the capacity of justified men on whom it was a righteous thing to bestow the reward of loyal and of rendered services—to turn His throne into a throne of grace, and at the same time to preserve and to manifest its character as a throne of righteousness—This it is which gives its grand peculiarity to the dispensation of the gospel, and makes it to be both the wisdom of God and the power of God.

Let us now endeavour in the second place to explain how it is that we are justified by faith.

We say of a room, that it is lighted by the opening up of a window; and yet the window only transmits the light, which is given out by the Sun in the firmament. We say of a human body, that it is nourished by the act of eating; and yet by that act, we only take in the food which is the cause and the source of nourishment. We say of the holder of a deed of conveyance which has been gratuitously conferred upon him, that, by this holding, he possesses a title to certain properties; and yet he neither originated the deed, nor drew up the deed, nor granted the deed—he simply received the deed. And so it is, when we say of a man, that he is justified by faith. He who is so justified, is in possession of a discharge from the penalties of a broken law, and of a right to the rewards of an

honoured and of a fulfilled law. But faith did not work out this discharge, faith did not establish this right, faith barely imports these privileges from the quarter in which they are framed; and thus brings them into contact with the person of the believer.

We know, that there is a jealousy about this point among theologians, and a fear, lest, by assigning too high an office to faith, the honour of Christ be infringed, as the alone author of justification. It is He in fact who achieved the whole of this benefit; and man receives of it by the act of believing. Man is not in any way the author of this work—he only obtains the good of it by giving credit to the author. Christ reared the foundation—man leans upon it. He does no more than is done by the malefactor, who holds out his hand to the reprieve which has been made out for him; and thus acquires a warrant for his discharge.

And it will serve still more to exalt the one party, and to annihilate the other, in this transaction—when man sets himself in good earnest to the work of believing—when he sends out his mind, as it were, in repeated efforts, to lay hold of the truth which is unto salvation; and as often retires dejected and baffled by the fruitless undertaking—when he wearies himself out with diligence and prayer; and, after the tarrying of weeks or months or years, still finds that he cannot pluck this pearl of great price from its hiding-place—when, instead of creating light for himself, he finds that he must knock for it at the door of a sanctuary which he cannot open—Should God at length meet this inquirer, and

shed the powerful demonstration of His Spirit over the doctrine he is in quest of—he will not be the man who aspires to a share in the glory of his own redemption, or counts upon his faith as an independent contribution which he has brought to the cause. This very faith he will acknowledge to be a gift; and, like the paralytic who is asked to stretch out his hand to an offered alms and receives power along with the offering, he, under a sense of nothingness, will feel that to himself belongs all the gratitude of his deliverance, and to God belongs all the glory of it.

Meanwhile, faith, though neither the procuring cause nor the meritorious ground of justification, is indispensable to it; and just as much so, as the striking out of a window is to the lighting of an apartment. It is the medium of conveyance, through which God hath ordained that all the blessings, purchased and wrought for by the Saviour of sinners, shall come into contact and appropriation with the sinner's soul. We are sensible, that something like an efficient importance is given to faith, by such expressions as the righteousness of faith, and that by faith we are justified—But never is it intended, that faith hath wrought out for us a righteousness; and only, that it affords a passage through which all the privileges of a righteousness already prepared, may be conveyed to the believer. A man must believe, ere he can be dealt with by God, as if, in the reckoning of God, he were a righteous person. But still it is the everlasting righteousness which Christ hath brought in, that is so reckoned to him. When justification is spoken of, the near and the

natural question for him who desires to obtain it, is—what for this purpose must I personally do, or what must I personally become? This suggests a competition, not between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of man, but between one personal condition of man in respect either of state or of performance and another. The question —"what shall I do to be saved?" points the attention of him who offers to resolve it, to an alternative between the efficacy of a man's doing for this object, and the efficacy of a man's believing for it. When the whole efficacy is given to the latter, it is for the purpose of setting aside altogether the efficacy of the former; and to decide for man the interesting question of what that single thing is, which he has personally to attend to in order to be justified before God. The question, whether my faith or the work which Christ hath finished is the efficacious principle of my salvation, presents another alternative, and there is nothing in the first solution, which ought to darken or to embarrass the second. Strange if man should arrogate a glory to himself, because told to do that thing by which in fact the whole glory of his salvation is awarded to another —if the law of faith, the declared effect of which is to exclude boasting, should be so perversely understood as to encourage it; or if that doctrine should go so mar and to divide the glory of Christ, by which we are led to look to Him alone for salvation.

Your salvation, says St Paul, is by grace, and through faith; and not of works lest any man should boast. Were a competition on the question

what shall man do to be saved, started between man's faith and man's works, this apostle would decide it to be altogether of faith and not of works. Were it a question, whether does salvation come of God's giving or of man's believing, and a competition started between grace and faith, the apostle would decide that it was by grace and through faith. Were the question, whether is it God who gives it or man who works for it, and the competition between grace and works, the apostle has bequeathed us his decision upon this too in the following memorable sentence—"If by grace then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."

We now proceed to observe, that faith is no faith at all, if it embrace not the whole testimony of God. But the benefits annexed to faith are various. There is forgiveness promised to it. There is the plea and the reward of righteousness promised to it. There is strength for holy obedience promised to it. Now faith, in the act of bringing home as it were each of these benefits, attaches itself at the time to a particular and corresponding portion of the testimony; and what portion of the testimony is that to which faith attaches itself, when, through it as a medium of conveyance, the privilege of justification comes into the possession of a believer?

It is that portion, in which the narrative of Christ's work for our justification is laid before us. It is that portion, which relates to the death and the obedience of Christ. By the one He offered Himself up as a propitiation for the sins of the world;

and those of the world who believe in this, have their sins remitted to them. By the other, that is by His obedience, which comprehends His death, He fulfilled the righteousness of the law; and this righteousness it is testified to us that He fulfilled in our stead; and the merit of this righteousness is imputed, and the reward of it is assigned unto all, and is upon all who believe.

There has a distinction been made between His passive and His active obedience. By the one He is conceived to have expiated sin, by bearing in His own person the punishment which sinners should have borne. By the other He is conceived to have acquired for them a righteousness, by rendering in His own person, that perfect obedience which they should have rendered. Certain it is that His work is commensurate to the whole extent of their justification. It accomplished for them the remission of the penalty. It accomplished for them their right to a reward. And the oft-repeated doctrine of the Bible is, that we obtain this right and this remission by faith—that by faith we are justified—that the righteousness of Christ is unto those who believe—that it is a righteousness made up of the works of Jesus Christ, and is altogether separate from any righteousness which may be conceived to reside in the works of the sinner—and that upon his believing, it is not what he hath done for himself, but what Christ hath done for him, which is imputed unto him for righteousness.

So that man is accepted into forgiveness and favour, not on account of any righteousness of his own—but on the righteousness of Christ being put

to his account; and it is counted to him on his becoming a believer. He stands before God in the name of the Lord his righteousness; and the reward due to this righteousness is made his reward. His own personal guilt has been laid upon Christ; and on him it has been expiated. The merit of Christ is laid upon himself, and in himself it is rewarded. His sin put to Christ's account, and Christ's righteousness put to his account, changes altogether his relation with the Lawgiver whom he had offended. From an heir of wrath, he becomes a child of adoption; and, at that point of marvellous transition when belief enters in, he is vested with all the rights and translated into all the privileges of the sons of God.

And thus all we have said of justification in the general, is confirmed and appears in greater distinctness, when we come to view the ground of justification. A man is justified, but not on the ground of anything he deserves in himself. It is on the ground of what another has wrought for him, and deserved for him. He is held to be righteous in respect of claim, though he is not righteous in respect of actual character. It would not be true to say of him, that, as he is in himself, he is a righteous person. But it is just on account of the relation that he bears to another, to treat him as a righteous person. The righteousness, in fact, which avails him for being justified, has a forensic and not a personal acceptation. It is that by which he is held righteous in law, though not in fact—by which the sentence of guilt is taken off, and he is discharged from the penalty—by which the sentence is

utterly converted, and he is invested with a title to the reward.

And you further see, how this treatment of the sinner stands distinguished altogether, from a simple and direct ministration of kindness to him. It is the kindness of God to him, no doubt; but a kindness which feels itself at fredom to expatiate, on account of a consideration rendered to the justice of God.—Mercy did not reach in a direct way the accomplishment of her object; though it was mercy that instigated the whole of that process, by which the object has been gained. It was not the deed of mercy awake, while other attributes were sleeping. All of these, if we may so speak, were at their post; and all of them gave assent to this lofty and mysterious device of man's restoration. So that though his salvation be a boon, it is not a simple deed of favour and forgiveness, which is put into his hand. But it is a deed by which a right to favour and forgiveness is conveyed to him, that is put into his hand. Man is not only permitted to put up a prayer for these blessings; but he is empowered to put up a plea for them. He can appeal for them to the truth and the righteousness, as well as to the mercy of God—so that God is faithful and just in forgiving his sins—God is just while the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

We know that the doctrine of justification by faith, has been charged with an injurious effect on the moral character of him who embraces it; and were the present the place for it, we would willingly consent to try it by this, as a touchstone of its worth. But in the meantime we may remark, that

acquiescence in this doctrine is the far more legitimate fruit of a lofty than of a low conception of virtue. He who stands on the level of human attainment, and thinks of the law that he has not only reached but exceeded its acquirements, will look down upon it as exhibiting a humbler pattern of excellence than he himself has realised; and, in his bosom, will there be the elated feeling that in his own strength he is more than conqueror. He again who looks on the level of actual character as being on the same even platform with the commandment of God, will feel at least that he has gained his object; and neither will he seek to be justified by faith. It is the man who stands on this level and thinks so sublimely of the law, that, in order to survey it aright, he has to cast his upward eye to a light that is inaccessible—it is he who carries in his mind the purest and the worthiest imagination of moral rectitude—it is he whose view of the standard of duty is the most exalted, and whose desires after the fulfilment of it are the most earnest and aspiring—he it is, who, humbled under a sense of transgression, will be most ready to admit the need of another righteousness than his own. Strange, if a belief, which originates in a high sense of virtue, should issue at length in the subversion of its practice. But whether righteousness of life be the product of this doctrine or not, we do well to remember, that a true conception of righteousness, in all its extent, and in all its elevation, is the likeliest principle for urging us onwards to the adoption of such a doctrine; and, amid all the aspersions it has gotten, as being hostile to the cause of morality—let us not forget,

that he bids fairest to be a disciple of faith, who has the keenest perception of morality, and he who yields her the profoundest reverence.

And we know nothing that flashes with more evidence from the Bible, than that to be justified by faith is the authorised way of being justified; and that to seek to establish a righteousness of our own is called by the apostle a stumbling-block; and that to slight the righteousness of Christ, is not only to refuse the offer of the Lawgiver, but to aggravate His wrath; and that to attempt a plea of merit for ourselves, instead of coming unto God in that merit which the Saviour hath earned for us, is, in fact, to abandon the patent way, and to attempt the kingdom of heaven by the prosecution of a by-path. Nothing can be more pointedly announced than that Christ is the way, and that there is no other by which a sinner may draw nigh unto God. It is a covered way; and the material by which the covering is formed is the righteousness of Christ, resting by imputation on the head of the believer. Should he try to wrap himself in the merit of his own obedience, he will find it too frail and too scanty a defence against the storm of the coming vengeance; and the only method of turning the fury of God into the favour of God, is to appear before Him in the faith of that righteousness which He Himself hath prepared with which He was well pleased when rendered to Him by His well-beloved Son, and for the sake of which He is well pleased with all those who put their trust in Him. They are accepted in the beloved. They are justified in the name of Jesus

Let us no longer therefore forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew out unto ourselves broken cisterns which can contain no water. Let us set ourselves to the work of believing. We know that to believe without evidence is impossible; and that if we could not set you on the path where that evidence is to be met, to bid you believe were a useless and unintelligible prescription. But if our evidence for the word lieth in the word itself—then, plainly, what you have to do, is to give earnest heed unto the testimony. Hearken diligently unto me says the Lord, and your soul shall live. Read diligently the Bible. Bring your mind into frequent contact with what is written in this book; and it will at length evolve itself in its characters, both of importance and of truth, upon your understanding. Go up unto Jerusalem, says Christ, unto His disciples; and there will you be endued with light and power from on high. Jerusalem was the assigned post at which they had to wait then, for such a demonstration; and the Bible is the post to which we must repair now, that we may be visited by the same demonstration. The man who reads, and who prays, and who sends forth his mind to the assurances of the Bible, and who tries to conceive the trueness of them, will at length be met by the evidence of the trueness of them. The trumpet does not blow an uncertain sound, when it calls on you to believe and be saved. Even before the light of conviction has spread its overpowering brilliancy over the truths of Scripture, there is a clear definite intelligible something which an inquirer has to do. He will have ample reason to

rejoice, after he has found the Lord. But there is a way to find Him. There is a way of seeking Him; and we have a warrant to rejoice at its very outset—for let the heart of them, says the Psalmist, rejoice, *who seek* the Lord. Let it never be said that we are without the means of faith unto life everlasting, when we have the Bible in our hands, and the promise that God will light His candle in our hearts. The evidence upon which this coming conviction will turn, it is not for us at present particularly to explain. But many is the simple cottager, on whose understanding it has dawned; and he has seen the wisdom and authority of God engraven on the pages of his Bible; and he has recognised His voice in the call which is there lifted up to all the ends of the earth, to look unto Christ and be saved; and he has perceived, that, as there was no exception to the call, he would in fact be thwarting the message altogether, did he make an exception of himself; and, with this warrant for appropriation, he has appropriated the general declarations of the record to his own special and individual behoof; and thus has he entered into life, he has believed in Christ his righteousness, and according to his belief so has it been done unto him.

To encourage you in the work of thus seeking after the kingdom of God and His righteousness, let us assure you, that, from the very first movement of such an undertaking, if honestly embarked in and steadily pursued, you have your well-wishers in heaven. God has no pleasure in your death. It were just another triumph to that process of

redemption, which He had made known, did you come in for a share of its benefits. Nothing can exceed the welcome and the good-will which lie in that call, from which there is most assuredly no exclusion of you. Even though you were the chief of sinners, it were just a glorifying of the gospel of Christ, that, by your believing it, it became the power of God unto your salvation. He protests that it is not your destruction He wants. It is your deliverance, take His word for it, that He longs after. And now that that deliverance is rendered possible, do we see the Creator actually courting His creatures to reconciliation. For the deliverance might have been impossible. In the same sense in which it is said of God that He cannot lie, might it have been said that God cannot take sinners into acceptance. They must be vested with a righteousness, ere the all-righteous God can admit them in peace and favour to his presence. Here lay a difficulty, not merely affirmed to be so in the schools of Theology, but actually and substantially felt to be so in the counsels of Heaven —not merely standing, till it was done away, an unresolved puzzle in the theory of jurisprudence; but standing, till it was done away, an impenetrable barrier of separation between God and the guilty. But now that a righteousness has been provided, this wall of partition has been removed; and there is nothing but the most affectionate urgency on the part of God, that man should walk through the intervening space, which has thus been opened for him. The proposal is, that the sin of his own person should be transferred to the person of

another, and the righteousness of that other should be transferred to him. These are the plain but weighty terms of a message, which is destined to charm our world into confidence and spiritual life. Whoever shall think of the proposal that it is a fiction, and a mockery,—he, for himself, shuts the door against it; and on him it cannot be realised. He who believes it an honest proposal, shall actually find it so. This faith opens an inlet, through which the righteousness of Christ reaches his person, and becomes attached to it by imputation. He staggers not at the promise of God because of unbelief. He counts Him to be faithful who has promised; and God, counting this to him for righteousness—by faith he is justified.

We now proceed, in the third place, to offer our remarks on the connection between faith and peace.

To illustrate this connection, little, we apprehend, need be said in the explanation of these two terms. If I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings, I have faith in the Bible; or I have faith in the Author of the Bible. If I believe any testimony to be true, I have faith either in the subject of the testimony, or in the author of it. If I believe a doctrine to be true, I may be either said to believe in the doctrine, or to believe in him who proposes it. I believe all that I find in the Scriptures to be true, or I have faith in the Scriptures. One of the things I find there, is, that the whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and thus for me to believe in Scripture is to believe in God. He sent His written message to the world; but He employed a messenger even Jesus Christ, and I

believe also in Christ if I believe the sayings of the Bible to be true sayings.

There are two ways in which the phrase peace with God may be understood. It may signify that the real hostility which subsisted between the two parties is now at an end; and, in particular, that God, the alone party who can turn His purposes of hostility into execution, has now ceased to be the enemy of man and has become his friend. It may denote that the wrath of God towards man is appeased, and that the former is now willing and actually will bestow friendship and forgiveness upon the latter. Now it is conceivable, that this may be the real state of matters between God and man, and yet man be ignorant that it is so. God may have become his friend—and yet he remain for some time in dread of God as an enemy. After a negotiation for peace has terminated in the accomplishment of it between two countries, it may take months before an inhabitant of one of these countries comes to know this. There may be a real peace between the countries, while, in his bosom, there is all the restlessness and discomfort of a yet unappeased terror. Now the same of God. It is certainly conceivable that He may have ceased from His purposes of vengeance upon man, before that man comes to know this—so that there may be a real peace between the two parties, while, in the bosom of one, there may still be the turbid apprehension of God as a judge and God as an avenger. And this suggests a second sense in which the term peace may be understood—even that peace which arises in a man's bosom, when he ceases from those

painful apprehensions of God's displeasure, which formerly disturbed him. The one denotes the change which has taken place in the external relation between the parties. The other denotes the change which has taken place in the mind of one of them, when he comes to have a view of the new relation into which he has been translated. Peace in the one way, denotes the event of reconciliation on the part of God towards man. Peace in the other way, denotes the calm which enters into the heart of man, when he is visited by a sense of reconciliation.

Now there can be no difficulty in perceiving why peace in the first sense of the term, should stand connected with faith. This connection is a matter of God's own appointment. He hath so willed it, that if man shall believe in the message which He hath sent, He shall cease to view man as an object of condemnation. He hath devised a scheme of mercy for sinners; and it hath pleased Him, that every sinner, who shall give Him credit for all He says about the plan and about the execution of it and so confides in its efficacy, shall also experience its efficacy. It may perhaps be altogether arbitrary on the part of God, thus to single out faith as the qualifying circumstance on the part of man through which God becomes pacified towards him. Be it so. It could not be in the hand of a more wise and righteous arbitrator; and were this the place for it, we, narrow and darkened as we are in our every view of the high matters of eternity, might still trace in the rule of proceeding the lineaments of wisdom and of rectitude. And if we can see rea-

son, why God should cease from His anger towards the man who confides in His declarations of good will, and of the plan by which He has carried it into accomplishment; and so should make the specific salvation of every individual, to turn on his possession of faith—still more may we discern a reason and a propriety, why God should *now* be so far reconciled to man in general, as to hold out salvation to all, and propose to the world at large the overtures of reconciliation. There is now made out in behalf of the whole species a capacity of salvation; and this capacity becomes an actual accomplishment, in behalf of every one son and daughter of the species who believes. He who has the faith is justified. He who wants the faith has the wrath of God abiding on him. Whosoever hath the faith is justified, and should all have the faith all would be justified. The friendship of God is actually conferred on those who believe. This friendship is put within the reach of all, who have within their reach the means of believing—the record of the sayings which are to be believed —the evidence, which all who will to do the will of God, may, upon their honest attention, actually find in that record; and upon which they obtain the faith that is unto salvation. There must be a reason why the benefits of the gospel, should have this special direction impressed upon them. There must be the uttermost wisdom, on the part of God, in selecting this as the condition on which the actual salvation of man turns in every particular case. But there is a still more evident reason, why now there should be such a disposition on

the part of God towards man, that salvation is largely and universally offered to him—that, whether he accepts or not, the invitation is now given, and may be carried round the globe without exception and without partiality—that a message of peace may now be carried to every door, and the bearer of the message be only acting in the spirit of his warranted commission, when he urges and entreats every man he meets with to entertain it—that this embassy from heaven may be made to traverse the face of our earth in every conceivable direction, and hold forth its free and generous proposals in every spot of ground on which is reared a human habitation. There must be a reason why these proposals should be restricted, in their effect and in their accomplishment, only to those who give credit to the embassy. But what is the cause that there should have been such an embassy at all?—that this world of sinners should have been so kindly and so generously dealt with?—that God, sitting on a throne of judgment, of which the stability must be upheld, should thus send forth the overtures of a free and willing acceptance over the whole extent of a guilty creation?—that He who cannot lie, and who therefore seemed, by the utterance of His threats and proclamations, to put peace with His rebellious creatures at an irrecoverable distance from Him, by laying upon it the burden of an impossibility which He Himself had framed—that still the movement towards this peace should proceed from the holy and inflexible God; and so patent a way to reconciliation be devised by Him, that all who will may have life, and all who

have the belief, which no man can refuse to have without the violation of a moral principle, might be restored to terms of friendship with their offended Lawgiver? How comes it that He should be so pacified towards those, who have trampled His law under foot, that all its sanctions are withheld from execution, and the threatened punishment is turned into the proclaimed and the offered reward? How comes it that every obstacle which formerly existed in the Divine bosom, should be now so marvellously cleared away?—that now there should be no barrier of separation with God?—that He, without let or hindrance, should now send forth so wide a call of reconciliation?—and that the contempt of man who will not listen, the incredulity of man who will not believe, form now the only resistance which it has to struggle with?

This change then in the feeling of the Divine mind towards sinners, is through Jesus Christ our Lord. The souls of those who believe in Him, are given to Him as a reward for His services. The peace which God has entered into with sinners, is through Christ their peace offering; and the very love which the Father bears to the Son, is among the number of its guarantees. It is not saying all that might be said for the strength and the sureness of God's pacific disposition towards us, when we say that His truth and justice have now been magnified on the person of the Redeemer, and that mercy is now free to follow the workings of its own kind and generous instigations. It is for the honour of Christ, as well as for the happiness of man—it is for the glory and the success of His great undertaking

—it is for the furtherance of that cause, upon the prosperity of which His heart is altogether set—it is giving Him in fact of the travail of His soul that He may be satisfied, that all who have faith in His name should have salvation by His merits. God, in holding out the right hand of reconciliation towards the guilty, is in fact rendering to His own righteous servant, to the elect in whom His soul delighteth, the reward of finished and accepted services. And from that tender but deeply mysterious prayer of the Saviour—"that all who believe in me shall be one, even as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in thee and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"—from this prayer, may we gather how firm is his security, and how intimate is his union with the Godhead, who hath fellowship, not with the Father only, but with the Father and the Son.

But there is not merely a connection between the faith of the sinner and the cessation of God's enmity against him, which is the first sense that we have given to the term peace. There is also a connection between the faith of the sinner and a sensation of peace, which thereupon enters into the sinner's bosom. He obtains peace and joy in believing. Before he had faith, and if he saw his danger aright, he was in a state of disquietude. After he has faith, and if he see aright his new relation with God, he will be delivered from this state. This process however, let it be observed, has been actually experienced by many who could not perhaps describe the steps of the process to others; and to whom also it may be altogether unnecessary, that another

should offer any description to them. In attempting the explanation of this process, we are sensible that we attempt a task of as difficult management on the part of the speaker, and requiring as patient and sustained an attention on the part of the hearers, as any that we have yet entered upon. It is at the same time an explanation, the metaphysical understanding of which is not essential to him, who, under the guidance of the Spirit, is made both to abound in faith and taste of peace as the fruit of His operation. But still it may help to evince to those who are without, the rationality of Christian experience; and it may even help, not only to comfort and confirm those who are within, it may also help them the more effectually to fulfil the precept of the apostle, "be able to render unto every one a reason of the hope that is in you."

And here let us observe, by the way, that the meaning of words is often darkened by the definitions which are offered of them. There is a light and a simplicity in many a subject, that is sometimes in danger of being buried under a parade of explanation. And we do confess, that it is with some degree of fearfulness we enter upon a topic, which involves in it some of the nicest and most interesting points of theological argument.

But on the other hand, we would have you to understand, that there may be a diseased and exclusive appetite on your part, for such views as force an easy and immediate conviction on the mind of the observer—such views as can be got at without any painful difficult or laborious ascent, by the steps of a lengthened investigation—such views as, with-

out the fatigue of a sustained attention, might flash a cheering and a satisfying light upon you by their own brilliancy; and while you are sitting in the posture of indolent spectators rather than of attentive hearers, minister some such cheap enjoyment, as the pictures of a moving panorama, on which the characters of fidelity and loveliness and grandeur stand palpably engraven. There is no doubt a pleasure, and a very exquisite one too, when, from a commanding eminence, we gain the wide and the magnificent survey of some rich domain of speculation. But it is a pleasure that must be purchased by toil. We must climb the eminence; and it is really expecting too much from the leader of such an intellectual expedition, that he has both to force his own way, and to sustain the weight of a whole multitude, who would like to be dragged, without effort on their part, to the summit along with him. You must contribute your own strength in this undertaking. You should yield the strenuous co-operation of your own attention to it. He cannot possibly carry you to all the interesting points of survey, without having to cross at times the uninviting wild, or to force the steep and the winding path of some arduous elevation. It is not possible, nor would it be right, to strew the whole of such a path with blossoms, or to irradiate the whole of it by the glow of a rich and attractive colouring. And you are positively in the wrong, if you look for delicacies on every step in the way of instruction. It bespeaks you to be children, and not men—the possessors of a superficial, rather than of a strong and hardy understanding,—if, ever on the edge

after such luxuries as regale your taste for poetry, or your taste for pathos, you sink down into disappointed listlessness, when truth offers herself to your notice with no other recommendation than her own worth, and in no other garb than her own sober and unwrought livery.

For the minister to lend himself to such an appetite as this, is, in the first place, to prostitute the pulpit into a stage; and for the people to be under its dominion, is, not merely to indicate how low is the place they occupy in the scale of intellect, but how utterly destitute and degraded is their place in the scale of Christianity. There is no practical conviction of sin, when the taste to which we have now referred, is the clamorous and predominant one. There is no earnest seeking after salvation, if he who is its messenger, must, to be heard with patience, shed a frivolous and a passing splendour over the way everlasting. We know not, if you have ever tried to compute the guilt which may be incurred by each of the parties in such a worthless and wretched ministration. Let us flee from it, as we would from that coming wrath, which must be in reserve for those, who could thus trifle with eternity, and spoil the doctrine of the cross of all that effect, which, in its own unaccompanied simplicity belongs to it. Put the dangerous propensity in question under the severest castigation. Let the weight and the value of truth, ever predominate in your esteem over those attractions, which, while they fascinate, may also most wofully mislead their tasteful and impassioned admirer. You never will reach the solid attainments of an intelligent and well found-

ed Christianity, if truth, and truth alone, have not power, though stript of all the embellishments and all the graces, to compel you around her, and bend your willing ear to her plain and grave and weighty announcements. This is the habit to which we should like to train you; and a habit to which we have our suspicions that some of you need to be trained. What we want to summon to the bar of instruction, is neither your taste, nor your feeling, nor your imagination. We want to summon your attention. Our exactions are upon this single faculty; and what we demand is its patient and prolonged waiting on a deliverance, which, however prosaic in its terms, is pregnant in its truths with matter, just as important in point of value as an existence of blessedness, and just as lasting in point of effect as are your unperishable natures. What we are feebly attempting to deal around us, is the very essence of that truth which is unto salvation; and, in the words of the Bible, we call upon you to stir yourselves up that you may lay hold of it; and that your souls may live we call upon you, not merely to hearken, but to hearken diligently.

It will perhaps aid you to understand how you should come to have peace, when you come to have a belief that the sayings of the Bible are true sayings—could you conceive one whom you believe to be a divine messenger, and calling himself if you will the Son of God, to approach any one of yourselves, and enter personally and individually into conversation with you. You are still, we suppose, under the feeling that there is not yet a settlement of the controversy between God and yourself as a

sinner; and that His Son comes to your door as a bearer of good tidings, as a setter forth of the way of peace and reconciliation. The question is, what are the sayings which we may conceive to be uttered on such an occasion—and how do they operate in communicating peace of mind to him who believes on them?

Did this messenger of God tell me, that he comes as the bearer of a sure and absolute salvation to me and to every one, and that all should in point of fact go to heaven when they die—we need to offer no explanation of the way in which peace would enter the heart, at the very moment in which the belief of such an announcement entered the understanding. It is not even necessary to conceive, that this communication should be personally directed to me by the mouth of a present and a living messenger. If there be faith, the effect in bringing peace to me is quite the same, whether I be told in this way of my own particular salvation, or whether I read in the Bible that all men immediately after death are to be translated into a blissful eternity. The belief of this saying would necessarily involve in it the belief, that I, as being a man, as being included in the general description of all men, had a sure part in that inheritance which fadeth not away. Were such one of the sayings of the Bible, then it follows directly from the import of it, that all who did believe in the sayings of the Bible would have peace.

It is unnecessary to observe, that no such intimation occurs in the written record we have of God's message to us; and that therefore the sup-

position of it serves no other purpose than that of illustration.

But again, did this messenger state to me in oral conference, not that all should be saved, but that only some should be saved; and that a book of life was kept in heaven; and that therein were kept the names of all to whom God had ordained a place in heaven: And did he further tell me, that my name was written there, then if I believed in his saying, would I be assured of the prospect of blessedness that lay before me, and this also would be an assurance of peace. Or, to shift our supposition from a messenger to a Bible, if, in that Bible my name and my locality and my circumstances and the period of the world at which I lived were so specified, as completely to identify my person; and it were said of this person that he was of the number who were recorded in the book of life—then also would a belief in the sayings of the Bible, carry me, by an immediate transition, to the peace I am in quest of. But in truth, there is no such revelation there. There is not one individual of our species to whom the Bible attaches such a specific mark of his personal and particular safety as this. The Bible deals in generalities; and, if he is ever to have peace and joy in believing, he must gather it out of these generalities; and they must be constructed in some such way, as to have the effect they would have had, had they looked particularly towards him, and had they carried in them so pointed a direction to himself, that, on their basis, he can trust in having God for his own

friend, and an eternal dwelling place with God for his own inheritance.

It is true that the Bible does tell us something of the book of life. It tells us that the names of all who after death are to be translated into the realms of everlasting security are written there. It tells us that there are names, but it does not tell us which names. Here then is an example, in which it would be possible to have faith without having peace. Did a messenger from God just tell me thus much—just tell me that some were to be saved, and that there was a list of them in heaven, but forbear to satisfy my painful desire of knowing whether my name had been inserted in the list, I might perceive in all this a chance of salvation; but the uncertainty of it would continue to adhere to me on this side of death. I might thoroughly believe his announcement as far as it goes; and yet not be at rest. Or if, instead of being an intimation to me from a living messenger, it were an intimation of the Bible to all the readers of this book; and were it the only intimation from which we were left to gather hope to ourselves, all men might have faith and yet no man have peace. I cannot ascend to heaven while in the body, and there examine the contents of the book of my destiny. This mighty secret lies in a book that is far off, and to me inaccessible; and thus might I have entire faith in all the sayings of the word that is nigh, and yet live out the whole of my time in the world in a state of fearful agitation.

But again, let the messenger talk with me, and

inform me that though that salvation, the tidings of which he bore, would only be realised by a particular number of the species—yet he had a more satisfying indication to offer than the mere circumstance of their enrolment in a record that was invisible, and that all who were so destined had a visible mark each on his own forehead. I may have faith in this announcement too; and could I only ascertain by self-inspection the existence of the mark in question, I would no sooner have the faith than I would have the peace along with it. But had I no such mark, then my faith, instead of being the harbinger of my peace, would be to me the harbinger of despair. So that if, instead of being the statement of a messenger it were the statement of a Bible, all men might believe in it, and yet only those men be at peace who were in possession of the mark—while the others who had equal faith, but were destitute of the mark, would be reduced by their faith to a state of utter despondency.

Were the first then the only announcement in the Bible respecting the future condition of man, viz., that forgiveness and favour were granted to all without exception—all who had faith would have peace. Were the second the only announcement, viz., that there were favour and forgiveness for a particular number whose names were written in a book that was inaccessible, all might have faith and yet none have peace. Were the third the announcement, viz., that favour and forgiveness were only to those who were in possession of a certain palpable mark upon their foreheads that could be instantly ascertained, all men might have

faith—both those who had the mark and those who wanted it; and yet this faith would bring despair to the latter, and peace only to the former. Settled peace would only be the portion of the one class and as settled despair the portion of the other class.

Let us now suppose, that the mark in question, instead of being of so palpable and so discoverable a sort as a visible impression on the forehead, lay deeper and more difficult of access within the recesses perhaps of a man's mind and a man's character. In this case, there might be no peace till the mark was ascertained; and the peace might be long of coming, if it came as the result of an anxious and laborious examination. If the mark be not such as to obtrude itself upon the discernment at a single glance, this might delay the attainment of the peace after which we are aspiring. It may be easy to perceive by the organ of the eye, that which is situated without us. It is not so easy, in general, to perceive by the organ of consciousness, that which is situated within us—to make a survey of all the objects which lie in the hidden province that comes under the recognition of this faculty; and there to take account of such a desire, or such an affection, or such a principle, as that, on the assured possession of it, we may be assured of a destiny of bliss being in reserve for us.

Now in none of these ways have we yet unfolded, either what the chief and at the same time most comprehensive saying of the Bible is upon this matter, or how the peace of a sinner's mind stands connected with the act of his believing it. The Bible

does not proclaim absolute forgiveness and felicity to all men—so that the transition from faith to peace is not just so direct and obvious, as under the first supposition. It does proclaim this for a particular number; and it tells us also that their names are written in the book of life, though it no where specifies the names—so that as under the second supposition, were there no other announcement on the subject, all might believe and yet all might remain in a state of disquietude. And it also assigns marks by which the children of the kingdom might be distinguished even in this life—though these marks be not generally of so palpable a sort, as that they can be seized with the same promptness and facility, with which the eye is arrested by something externally and immediately visible. And therefore to come at the thorough assurance of having such marks—it might be necessary to institute a lengthened and laborious process of self-examination. And here the circumstance which offers itself, in proof that we have not yet by any of our suppositions got into a precise accordancy with the Bible, is, that, under none of them have we yet assigned such sayings as have precisely the same influence with the Bible in pacifying a sinner's bosom. In none of them would belief have the same effect upon peace, that a belief of Scripture has. For while, on the one hand, there are marks specified in the Bible, by which the children of the kingdom are distinguished from the children of this world—there are, on the other hand, sayings in the Bible, the belief of which, antecedent to all self-examination, brings an instantaneous peace and joy along with them. There

are tidings which are there called tidings of great joy; and when is it, one would think, that the joy should be felt but just when the tidings are believed? They positively would not deserve the name of glad tidings, unless they gladdened our hearts at the moment of our putting faith in them; and, accordingly, we read, both of the first and of the latter Christians in all ages, how often their peace came immediately in the train of their faith—how they had peace and joy in believing—how as soon as the word of the testimony dawned with credit upon their understanding, so soon did it prove itself a peace-speaking testimony, and that by a tranquillizing influence which it brought at the very moment into their hearts—So that there must be a something in the communications of this book, which, if rightly understood, must, when believed, bring peace immediately along with it. And yet in this very book we are called upon to prove ourselves, and to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and to take heed lest we fall, and to labour that we may obtain full assurance, and to count not that we have yet attained. And while, on the one hand, the first converts did at the very outset receive the word with gladness—they, on the other hand, were taught to look upon their salvation as a point at issue, as a matter in dependence, as the reward of a race that had yet to be run, as the prize of a victorious contest that had not yet been carried to its termination: And thus, while the peace of God ruled in their hearts, their prospect of eternal life did not lie before them in such full characters of certainty, but that it admitted of being brightened into a still

more cheering hope, and confirmed into a still higher and more steadfast degree of assurance.

So that there is both a peace felt by the believer, when he looks to the truth that is without him in the Bible; and yet that Bible refers his attention to a mark that is within him upon his own heart. The word and the testimony of Christ, at the first drop peace upon him. Marks which by the work of Christ are impressed on the believer's person, afterwards reflect peace upon him. There is peace at the outset, if he believe what he is told about salvation; and yet it is a peace which admits of being confirmed afterwards—just as if his salvation were still a matter of doubt and a matter of dependence. There is something peculiar surely in the sayings of the Bible, about this whole matter of a sinner's hopes—a something which distinguishes the whole sum of these sayings, from any of the single suppositions that we have yet come forward with —a something which brings to one these apparent inconsistencies, and turns that which looks a foolishness and a mystery to the eye of the world to be indeed the wisdom of God for the world's salvation.

Were we called upon then to assign the most compendious, and at the same time the most frequently reiterated saying of the Bible about the salvation of man, we would fix upon that statement of constant occurrence in its pages, that it is he who believeth that shall be saved. It is like as if the messenger whom we have already quoted, should come to my door and offer salvation to me simply upon my giving credit to him. It is not an absolute offer

of salvation, as under the first supposition. It is not the bare announcement of a chance for salvation, which could never be ascertained on this side of death, because the certainty of it was only recorded in a book of names that was inaccessible. It is not the assurance of salvation to me, on the possession of a mark that stands visibly engraven on my forehead, which if I have, I in my belief of such a message shall have peace; and, if I have not, I shall on the very same belief be plunged into despair. Neither is it such an assurance of salvation on any other more latent mark, as to make me feel that the first thing I have to do is to look inwardly upon myself, and there institute a metaphysical search into the arcana of my heart and of my character. The intimation is that if I believe I shall be saved. The peculiarity lieth here, that the messenger makes my salvation to turn upon my faith in his statements—makes it to turn on possession of a personal attribute certainly, or if you will a personal mark—such a mark as has its residence within me, and to find and ascertain the existence of which I must look inwardly; but at the same time such a mark, as neither I nor any man can possibly acquire, but by first looking outwardly. I cannot believe in any affirmation, till I have looked to the matter of that affirmation. I cannot have faith in the statements of the messenger till I have considered his statements. It is true that to believe is a personal act; but it is the act of a mind sending itself forth, and busying itself among the things to be believed. It is true that faith, just like affection or principle or desire, is

a personal accomplishment. But it is an accomplishment stamped upon my person, by an influence emanating from that which is without; and it is by the direction of my mental eye to the object without, that I keep the avenue open for the transmission of this influence. Though it be on the possession of a personal accomplishment—though it be on myself that faith hath its standing-place, and it be on the possession of faith in the statements of a messenger calling himself divine that my salvation is made to turn—it were altogether preposterous on that account, to look first away from the statements with the view of looking inwardly and downwardly upon myself. It were just as preposterous, as if some benefit were to accrue on my obtaining a sight of the sun in the firmament, I should, instead of looking outwardly toward him, endeavour to search for the image that he has impressed of himself upon the retina of my eye. Was it upon some other speciality of my understanding or of my character than faith, that the Bible made my eternal felicity to hang—I should instantly have felt myself committed to a process of self-examination. I should have looked inwardly upon myself. But when it comes forth with the primary declaration, that we are saved by faith in its own statements—this draws the attention of the mind to those statements, and we are led to look outwardly upon our Bibles. The only conceivable way in which we can obtain a belief of any truth, is by turning the eye of the mind towards the truth and its accompanying evidence. So that the truths of the Bible are among the first things with which a

seeker after God, who is in the direct way of salvation, feels himself engaged. Were he bidden look to some external object so that he may obtain the sight of it and be saved, the eye of his body would be directed towards that object and not towards his own person. And were he bidden give earnest heed to the word of God's testimony so that he may obtain the belief of it and be saved, would the eye of his mind be directed towards the things contained in this book. It is there repeatedly said that faith is competent to the entire salvation of every one who possesses it. If there ever should then be any other marks insisted on, these must be subordinate to faith—for faith, if competent to salvation, must be competent to the formation upon the person of every such mark as is indispensable to salvation. So that in every view of it, believing comes upon us with all the urgency of the first matter on hand. The great, and what ought to be the felt concern of every one of us, is how to attain the faith; and, for this purpose, there is not a more likely or suitable attitude of the mind than an earnest contemplation of the objects of faith.

In endeavouring to trace the connection between faith and peace, let us remark, that, had the saying to be believed been that our salvation turned on our possession of some personal property distinct from faith and independent of it—then if we believed this saying, would we have gone instantly in search of this property, and explored the map of our own persons. But when the personal property which is unto salvation is just the very faith itself, then our possession of it may be indicated in two ways

—either by the liveliness of its own exercise, or by the existence of other personal marks which it works upon the character by its own influence and operation. In both these cases, the connection between faith and peace is brought about, by our being made conscious that we have faith—conscious that we have that within us or about us which ensures our salvation. But still if faith be only known by its exercises, it must be in exercise before we are conscious of it—or if it can be only known by its fruits, it must have had enough of time and enough of operation to produce these fruits, ere we can infer the existence of it. So that ere peace can be derived from the consciousness that we have faith —faith is in actual operation; the mind is in contact with the truths of the Bible; the inquirer is exploring the map of revelation; he is contemplating objects that are without him, and he believes their reality. He must look outwardly, before, through the medium of consciousness, he can gather any peace in connection with faith by looking inwardly.

What we affirm is, that such are the truths of the Christian revelation, that, in the single act of looking outwardly upon them, there is a peace which enters into the looker's mind along with his faith. There is a peace in the bare exercise of believing. The truths themselves are fitted to convey peace into the heart, at the very moment that they are recognised to be truths. Even were it possible to believe without the consciousness of believing, such are the intimations of the gospel, that a single perception of the trueness of them (a single reliance

upon the faithfulness of these intimations) is enough of itself to send a tranquillizing influence into the sinner's bosom. Consciousness may afterwards suggest to me that I am a believer. The faith which has taken possession of my mind, may there work the influences upon my heart and character which are ascribed to this principle in the New Testament; and, from the fruit of these influences may I gather the existence within me of the real faith of the New Testament. I may then couple this discovery with the assurance, that the privileges of the gospel are unto all and upon all who believe; and may thus come at peace through the medium of a process of self-reflection and self-examination. This is a possible—nay this is a legitimate—nay this is a prescribed exercise with every disciple of Christ. But still the peace which is thus come at, is but the confirmation of a peace which is already arrived at previously. It is not then that peace makes its first entrance into the heart—nor is it the introduction of a new feeling which takes place at this time; but only the ratification and the establishment of an old feeling. There was a peace conceived in the sinner's heart, along with the delivery of the message of the gospel, so soon as that message was understood in the terms of it and discerned in the trueness of it; and, just as upon the utterance of any other good news, a joy will be felt at the moment of their utterance barely upon their being believed and though there be no reflex consciousness of believing—so were the good news of the gospel fitted in the days of the apostles, and are they fitted still, to send an instantaneous peace into the bosom,

and that solely on the perception that we have of its being a true and a creditable message.

For should the bearer of such a message come to my door, and tell me, that God carries to me individually such a goodwill in His heart as to have no pleasure whatever in my death—what else can it require than a simple faith in such a statement, to be gladdened and tranquillized by it? Or should he call himself an ambassador from God, and say that by his mouth God beseeches me to be reconciled—will there no peace and no joy flow direct from my faith in this communication? We want not to embarrass you by the metaphysics of any unseen and inward principle whatever. But should a powerful and offended neighbour, send his own son to me with the intelligence, that he has now obtained by the hands of an interposing friend an ample satisfaction for all the wrongs I ever inflicted on him, and is now ready to take me into friendship—is there any thing metaphysical or embarrassing in our discernment of that process, by which a simple feeling of deliverance from fear will come immediately in the train of a simple belief in this intelligence. And sinner as I am, deeply as I have revolted against the Lawgiver in heaven, inflexible as His justice is and awful as is the power of His anger—I only need to be told that God is pacified by the blood of an all sufficient propitiation, and to believe in what I am told that I may be pacified from my fears of the coming vengeance. Let me only believe what I am told of the Son of God, and I will no longer be afraid. Let me know it to be a truth, that my salvation is an object which

His heart is set upon—that He bore the pains of death, in order to accomplish it—that from the place of glory where He now sits, He casts a longing regard towards me, and that every look and every wish which I heave towards Him is met by the merciful High Priest of the human race, with a responding welcome—that He is able, and just as willing as He is able, to save me to the uttermost—that He knocks at the door of my heart, and that all which He wants and is honestly desirous of there, is to be admitted into confidence—that He offers me the redemption which He hath achieved for many, and not only backs the offer with the invitation of His Father but with the commandment of His Father that I should accept of it—Let me only conceive that these are so many steps of an authentic transaction in behalf of the world, and in behalf of me as one of the world's inhabitants; and there is not the distance of a single link, between my belief in all this, and the peace of deliverance the peace of joy the peace of expectation which emerges from it.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE ANALOGIES WHICH OBTAIN BETWEEN THE NATURAL AND THE SPIRITUAL HUSBANDRY.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—MARK iv. 26—29.

A MAN may be qualified for practically carrying forward a process, of whose hidden steps, and of whose internal workings, he is most profoundly ignorant. This is true in manufactures. It is true in the business of agriculture. And it holds eminently true in the business of education. How many are the efficient artisans, for example, in whose hands you may at all times count on a right and prosperous result; but who are utterly in the dark, as to the principles of that chemistry in their respective arts, by the operation of which the result is arrived at. And how many a ploughman, who knows best how to prepare the ground, and who knows best how to deposit the seed for the object of a coming harvest; and yet, if questioned upon the arcana of physiology, or of those secret and intermediate changes by which the grain in the

progress of vegetable growth is transformed into a complete plant ripened and ready for the use of man, would reply in the language of my text, that he knoweth not how. And in like manner, there is many a vigorous and successful educationist, who does come at the result of good scholarship, whether in Christianity or in common learning—and that without ever theorising on the latent and elementary principles of the subject, upon which he operates—without so much as casting one glance at the science of metaphysics, a science more inscrutable still than that of physiology; and which, by probing into the mysteries of the human spirit, would fain discover how it is that a truth is first deposited there by communication, and then takes root in the memory, and then warms into an impression, and then forms into a sentiment, and then ripens into a purpose, and then comes out to visible observation in an effect or a deed or a habit of actual performance. There are thousands, who, in the language of our text, know not how all this comes about; and yet have in point of fact and of real business, set the process effectively agoing. We are not sure indeed if our mental philosophers have done much, or if they have done any thing to guide or to enlighten the methods of practical education; and for this, we should certainly have less confidence in the philosophy of those speculative men who can expatiate on man's internal constitution, and talk of associations and remembrances and laws of primary or secondary suggestion—than we should have in the home-bred sagacity of those operative men, who have put forth their hand to the employment, and

laboured for years in the business of schools or of parishes.

The phrase of the "kingdom of Heaven" in our parable, possesses the same significancy, which it has in those passages where it is said, that the "kingdom of Heaven cometh not with observation" and "the kingdom of Heaven is within you." The kingdom of Heaven, in all these places, meaneth the reign of Heaven's principles over the heart of man. Let the word of God be addressed to him, and come home to his heart with a deep sense of its truth and obligation—this is the good seed taking firm root in it. Let his faith in the word be genuine, and have its genuine effect on his character and walk—this is the good seed yielding in abundance the fruits of righteousness. And thus it is, that, while in one parable, a teacher of the word is compared to a sower—in the parable before us, its train of influences upon the taught is compared to a process of vegetation.

We cannot afford, at present, to trace all the analogies, which obtain between a plant from the germination of its seed, and a Christian from the infancy of his first principles We shall in the first place confine ourselves to one or two of these analogies; and secondly endeavour to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of having a certain measure of light thrown upon them, by the comparison which is laid before us in this parable, between the work of a teacher and the work of a husbandman.

First then, in the agricultural process, there is

much that is left to be done by Nature, and in a way that the workman knoweth not how; nor is it at all necessary that he should. He puts forth his hand, and sets a mechanism agoing—the principles of which, he, with his head, is wholly unable to comprehend. The doing of his part is indispensable, but his knowledge of the way in which Nature doeth her part is not indispensable. And accordingly, after he hath sown, he may go to sleep if he chooses. He hath done the palpable work, and he wisely meddles not with the profound speculation. The casting of the seed into the ground was his concern. The bringing forth of the fruit, was what the earth did of herself; and by the operation of a physiology which he neither comprehends nor cares for, a harvest produce is given to him as the return of his exertions.

Now it is even so in the work of spiritual husbandry. There is an obvious part of it, that is done by the agency of man; and there is a hidden part of it, which is independent of that agency. The first part may well be done by a man, who is free of all that ambitious curiosity, which might have led him to pry into the mysteries of the second. Were this rightly attended to, it might save both parents and teachers, a deal of misplaced, and even mischievous anxiety. What more settled and reposing than the faith which a husbandman has in the constancy of Nature. He knows not how it is; but, on the strength of a gross and general experience, he knows that so it is. And it were well in a Christian teacher to imitate this confidence. There is in it, both the wisdom of experi-

ence, and the sublime wisdom of piety. He plants and he waters, and he goes through all the human work of the spiritual husbandry; and then, he should commit it quietly and confidingly, to Him who giveth the increase. He should not meddle with matters too high for him; and, on the principle of not attempting to be wise beyond the obvious lessons of Scripture or observation, he should cease his inquiries at the right point, and save himself from all the perplexities of restless and ungovernable speculation. There is great comfort in this exercise of faith; and, what is more, we promise it great efficacy. Be steadfast and immoveable, and always abounding in your proper work. God will not be wanting to His. There is no danger, either of the processes of Nature, or the processes of grace being suspended, because we have not been able to lift the veil, which shrouds them from the eye of our intelligence. We have nothing to do, but to make right and conscientious use of the instruments which have been put into our hand; and to rest assured, that, if we labour in the Lord, our labour shall not be in vain.

But again—it is the work of the husbandman to cast the seed into the ground. It is not his work to manufacture the seed. This were wholly above him and beyond him. The seed is provided for him by a higher hand; and all that lies upon him is the practicable task of putting it into the ground, and following his judgment in suiting the various kinds of seed to the various soils and various preparations.

In like manner, to excogitate and to systematize

the truths which we are afterwards to deposit in the minds of those who are submitted to our instruction, were a task beyond the faculties of man. These truths, therefore, are provided to his hand. What his eye could not see, nor his ear hear, has been brought within his reach by a communication from heaven; and to him nothing is left, but a simple acquiescence in his Bible, and a faithful exposition of it.

Our writers upon education may have done something. They may have scattered a few superficial elegancies over the face of society; and taught the lovely daughters of accomplishment, how to walk in gracefulness their little hour, over a paltry and perishable scene. But it is only in as far as they deal in the truths and lessons of the Bible, that they rear any plants for heaven; or can carry forward a single pupil to the bloom and the vigour of immortality. Ah, how much has this Bible simplified the work of religious education. It leaves me nothing, but to sit like a little child to the lesson that is set before me; and to convey it with simplicity and clearness, to the other children who stand in need of it. We may now give to the wind all our self-formed demonstrations; and for the fatigue and harassment of all former uncertainties, we have nothing to feel but a reposing confidence in the efficacy of the word, and nothing to do but to enter vigorously and without suspicion on the work of depositing it.

And as we have not to manufacture a seed for the operations of our spiritual husbandry—so neither have we to mend it. It is not fit that the

wisdom of God, should thus be intermeddled with by the wisdom of man. It is utterly incompetent for us, to throw aside any part of His revealed counsel as matter of unfit or dangerous communication; and it were putting forth a sacrilegious hand, did we offer to purify it, of what we choose to imagine a doubtful and deleterious ingredient. This must be kept back from our pupils, lest it leads to Antinomianism! That other must be kept back too, lest it unsettles their orthodoxy! Why, if we may not come absolutely forward with the Bible and the whole Bible, we are just where we were. If we can do nothing in the way of making a doctrine for ourselves, surely we do worse than nothing when we mutilate or modify the doctrine which has come down to us from heaven. If we are for ever to be qualifying and mending from the fear of consequences, then we are out at sea again, and in as harassing uncertainty as before; and the business of education is left to the waywardness of our gratuitous and ever-varying decisions. There is no other way of helping ourselves out of this difficulty, than just to bind over our whole understanding to our whole Bible. We dispute not the talent and genius of many, who, in the attempt of skilfully adapting the doctrine of Scripture to the mind of the scholar, have only made laborious deviations from the simplicity that is in Christ. But the man who spares himself all their work of ingenuity, or is even incapable of it, is better qualified for the business of religious education than they. He takes up the Bible fearlessly as he finds it. His single aim is to understand it, and to make it un-

derstood; and he brings a simple and a sincere mind to a simple exercise.

But again—we do not lose sight of the analogy which there is, between the work of a spiritual and that of a natural husbandman—when, after having affirmed the indispensableness of casting into the ground of the human heart the pure and the simple word, we further affirm the indispensableness and the efficacy of prayer. Even after that, in the business of agriculture, man hath performed his handiwork, by depositing the seed in the earth—he should acknowledge the handiwork of God, in those high and hidden processes, whether of the atmosphere above or of the vegetable kingdom below, which he can neither control nor comprehend. By the work of diligence which he does with his hand, he fulfils man's parts of the operation. By the prayer of dependence which arises from his heart, he does homage and recognition to God's part of it. And we are not to imagine that prayer is without effect, even in the processes of the natural economy. The same God who framed and who organized our great mundane system, has never so left it to the play and the impulses of its own mechanism, as to have resigned even for one moment that mastery over it which belongs to Him; but He knows when to give that mysterious touch, by which He both answers prayer, and disturbs not the harmony of the universe which He has formed. He knows how to make nature subservient to prayer, and that without invading the constancy of any of her visible successions; and though the eye of the most vigilant experimentalist, should never

once detect any law or principle of meteorology, to have been traversed by a special interference of the Deity—yet He nevertheless overrules all the changes of that fitful and fluctuating weather, on which all the hopes of the year are suspended; and the prayers of the husbandman for the earlier and the latter rains, for a season that might secure the ripenings of a productive, and a season that might secure the ingatherings of a safe and prosperous harvest, do not rise in vain to that place where sitteth the Guide and the Governor of our world. But it is in the world of mind, more than in that of matter, that the efficacy of prayer is realised. It is in those processes of the spiritual economy, when the mind of the creature reciprocates with the mind of the eternal Creator; and when the one, all athirst for the supplies of a refreshing and renovating grace, brings down a shower of living water out of the other's inexhaustible fulness. That is the prayer to which the ear of Heaven is more especially open, and which He who sitteth upon its throne most rejoices to meet and to satisfy. It is when man aspires upwards after fellowship with God, and looks and longs for the communications of light and of power from the sanctuary—it is then that God looks with fondest complacency upon man, and lets willingly downward all the treasures of grace upon his soul. He draws near unto those who draw near unto Him. It has been said of prayer, that it moves Him who moves the universe; and it is in the universe of spirit, that this saying has its chief and most emphatic fulfilment—among those busy interchanges, of dependence on the one hand

and good will upon the other, which take place between the great Parent Spirit, and all those derived or subordinate spirits who constitute the members of His immortal family. It is thus that prayer is an organ of such mighty avail, towards the prosperity and the extension of Christ's Church upon earth; and that whether in the shape of a direct supplication for our own souls, or of benevolent intercession for the souls of others—insomuch that the first preachers of the gospel, in the conduct of their spiritual husbandry, though busied to the uttermost in the work of casting the seed, gave an equal and a co-ordinate importance to the work of prayer for a blessing thereupon. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

And here a beautiful analogy suggests itself between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which serves to confirm by one illustration more, a doctrine that cannot be too often propounded to the view of Christians. It is said of Elisha that when he prayed, the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. Now we venture to affirm of all the plenty which was thus brought forth, that not one atom of it was produced, which did not spring up from seed that was previously in the ground. Of all the stems in that luxuriant vegetation which was given to Elisha's prayers, not one of them we will say grew without a root, but each of them from a root. The crop which was made to cover the fields of Israel, was not a crop without seed, but a crop from seed. Such a miracle might have been wrought, as, with-

out either rain or seed, could have made a boundless fertility to wave all over the land. But this was not the miracle which followed on the intercession of the prophet. It neither dispensed with seed, nor rain; but brought down the one from heaven, for the purpose of fructifying the other that lay waiting for it under the earth. For the development of the seed, a descent of rain from the sky was indispensable; but for a produce to come after the rain, the deposition of seed in the ground was alike indispensable. And it is just so in spiritual husbandry. The seed, which is the word of God, cannot bring forth fruit of itself, without the descent of the spirit of God—that living water from above upon the soul. And neither does the Spirit of God cause of itself the fruits of righteousness to grow, in a soul unfurnished with the truths and informations of the Bible. The vegetation of grace in the heart, is brought about by the one operating upon the other—by the spirit giving efficacy and expansion to the word. This view marks, and we think most distinctly, the limit between the agency of God and the agency of man—both what that is which man ought to perform, and what that is which he ought to pray for. The word is the germ, whence proceedeth all spiritual growth; and this must be deposited in his heart, or he shall not be saved. The Spirit is the shower, by which this word, that would else have remained inert and unproductive within him as a dead letter is quickened and unfolded; and unless the Spirit descend upon his heart, he shall not be saved. The soul that is ripening for heaven, has been compared to a well

watered garden. There would be no germination without a watering of grace from the upper sanctuary; but still the germination arises, not from the stones, but from the seeds of the garden—and if no seeds be there, neither showers nor sunshine will avail it. And thus let it never be forgotten, that, in the heart of man, every germination of fruit by the Spirit, is a germination from the truths of the Bible; and that therefore the work of grace in the soul is carried forward, not by perusals of the book alone, neither by prayers for the blessing alone, but by the co-operation of the perusals with the prayers.

We now come to the second thing proposed, which was to show, how some of what may be called the larger operations of Christian philanthropy, admit of a certain measure of light being thrown upon them, by the comparison made in this parable, between the work of a Christian teacher and the work of a husbandman.

And first, it may evince to us the efficacy of that Christian teaching, which is sometimes undertaken by men in humble life, and of the most ordinary scholarship. Let them have but understanding enough for the great and obvious simplicities of the Bible, and let them have grace enough for devout and depending prayer; and, on the strength of these two properties, they are both wise unto salvation for themselves, and may become the instruments of winning the souls of others also. We deny not the importance of a far loftier scholarship than theirs for the clergy; and, when pleading in behalf of the latter for the union of deep science

with the deepest and most devoted sacredness, we cannot fail to be reminded of Paul, who, though the most accomplished of all the apostles in the literature and philosophy of his age, was at the same time the most effective of them all in gaining converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We shall ever prize then a lettered and an intellectual church, whose ministers might sustain the battles of the faith on the field of authorship, or in the high places of society—and yet be the bearers of its glad and gracious embassy to the habitations of the poor. Nevertheless, we deem it a great thing for Christianity, that, among the poor themselves, there are to be had such effective auxiliaries to the cause, by whose means the whole mass might be leavened into a busier and more pervading fermentation; and the message of salvation be speeded with tenfold celerity, through parishes and populations that no minister can possibly overtake. It is well for the families of our land, that the lessons of eternity can fall with effect even from the lips of the cottage patriarch; and it is more especially well for its huge and overcrowded cities, that the piety of Christian mechanics who spend the week in unremitting drudgery, can be made successfully to bear at Sabbath, even on the profligacy and profaneness of a neglected boyhood. We cannot at all sympathize with that lordly intolerance, which would look either with distrust or with disdain upon their labours—which, jealous lest the work of Christian education should thus be vulgarised, would confine the whole religious instruction even of the common people, to regularly trained and regularly consti-

tuted functionaries. Were there a sufficient strength and equipment of these, we should the more readily defer to this antipathy; but it is quite palpable, that, in every parish, a great deal more can be done for the interest of the gospel, than lies within the achievement of one solitary arm; and that scarcely a town can be named, where, on comparing the little band of ecclesiastics with the hosts which are congregated therein, we do not feel, as if the labourers in so mighty a harvest, must utterly sink before it into the impotency of despair. There is now a general revolt against every species of monopoly, but the monopoly which would engross to itself the business of Christian instruction, and yet leave it undone, is truly the most execrable of all. And the horrors of that scarcity which it entails upon the land are nothing the less, because it is an artificial scarcity; or because the people are stinted in their supplies of the bread of life, not from any want of this precious commodity, but from the want of that free trade which might bear it more quickly and more copiously round among the families. There is a wo denounced upon those who keep the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and who neither enter themselves nor suffer those who are willing to enter. Be assured that the profligacy of the many in cities will fill up and overflow, unless the piety and Christian principle of the few, be called forth and rightly directed to the object of making head against it. Every available force which can be enlisted in this moral warfare, should be turned to the service of it. The religionist of some narrow street or lane, whom neighbours send

for when any of a family is dying—the gifted man of prayer, who, amid the groupe of assembled households, can send forth the unction of his own piety through a chamber crowded by listeners—the respected though humble fellow-citizen, who, in the absence of all the ministers, is called on for the holy services of a funeral day, and does acquit himself with a simple pathos and a power which are felt throughout all the company—the homely artisan, who, obscure in the world's eye, has yet been visited by a light from heaven; and, in love for the souls of those around him, longs and would labour that they shared with him the hope and the happiness which have gladdened his own—These were most efficient helps, in the work of Christianizing the wastes and the wilds of our city heathenism; and that, by a virtue which they have not gotten at any university, and which all our universities cannot give. It is in these powerful instruments, the word of God and prayer, that the secret of their great strength lieth. Theirs is that higher wisdom, which is revealed unto babes—not often to be found in schools of philosophy, and far oftener to be found among the humble and despised of this world—among men whose names are never heard of in our tasteful and enlightened circles—among obscure tradesmen, unlearned in every thing but the simplicity that is in Christ—among uncouth devotees whom the finger of scorn points at; but who have been known to persevere in their labours of love under the scowl of proud and privileged instructers; and to reclaim whole neighbourhoods, by bringing the terrors of the law and the calls

of repentance to bear with an all subduing energy upon the vices of their neglected populations.

But this brings us to the last of those analogies between the natural and the spiritual husbandry, which we shall at present be able to overtake—an analogy not certainly suggested by the text, but still close enough for the illustration of all which we can now afford to say, in defence of those parochial establishments which have done so much we think, both for the Christianity and the scholarship of our people.

A territorial division of the country into parishes, each of which is assigned to at least one minister as the distinct and definite field of his spiritual cultivation—this we have long thought does for Christianity, what is often done in agriculture by a system of irrigation. You are aware what is meant by this. Its use is for the conveyance and the distribution of water, that indispensable aliment to all vegetation, over the surface of the land. It is thus for example, that, by the establishment of ducts of conveyance, the waters of the Nile are made to overspread the farms of Egypt—the country through which it passes. This irrigation, you will observe, does not supply the water. It only conveys it. It does not bring down the liquid nourishment from heaven. It only spreads it abroad upon the earth. Were there no descent of water from above causing the river to overflow its banks—there is nothing in the irrigation, with its then dry and deserted furrows, which could avail the earth that is below. On the other hand were there no irrigation, many would be the tracts of country, that

should have no agriculture and could bring no produce. Let not therefore our dependence on the Spirit lead us to despise the machinery of a territorial establishment; and neither let our confidence in machinery lead us to neglect prayer for the descent of living water from on high.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GOSPEL OFFER.

"Good-will toward men."—LUKE ii. 14.

WHEN you want a friend to shift himself from a worse to a better situation, there are two distinct arguments that might be employed for the attainment of your object. You may either insist upon the evils of his present situation; or you may lay before him an alluring picture of the new situation, you want him to occupy. You may work either upon his fears or upon his hopes; and while by the constitution of some minds, the one argument is more effectual than the other—there are also minds, which need both the arguments to be earnestly and perseveringly urged upon them, ere you can obtain their concurrence in the measure you are aiming at.

Now there is one common situation in which we are all placed; and it is a situation full of insecurity and danger. We trust we may have said enough to do away that delusive peace, which many rest in the fancied accomplishments of their character. One face is more beautiful than another. Yet there is a worm of decay in each and in all of them; and the loathsomeness of corruption will at length spread itself, over the fairest and the most fascinating of

human forms. One mind is more amiable than another—yet each of them carries in it a rooted principle of alienation from God. Under all their variety from the less to the more lovely, this foullest of all moral deformity adheres to them; and thus it may be said of the most amiable men, that, with this point of decisive condemnation about them, they are the children of wrath even as others; and a spiritual law looks hard upon them also, for their habitual violation of its first and greatest requirement; and there is no one power within the whole compass of nature, no one expedient within reach of the situation which by nature they occupy, that can ward off the threatenings of this outraged law. Heaven and earth must pass away, ere a single sanction of God's proclaimed law can fail of its accomplishment. And thus it is, that there are many, and very many, revered by their fellows while they live, and leaving a dear and a much-loved remembrance behind them—who, remaining in the situation which by nature they occupied, remain in the number of those over whom the second death has full power; and they, even they, with all the passing admiration they get on this side of death, are fast hastening to a corruption more hideous than the grave, and to a misery still more hopeless than ever body of man in the full weight of its dying agonies was doomed to endure.

Now when we lay before you the danger and the helplessness of such a situation—when we tell you, that, forgetful of God as you are by nature, all the lustre of your other accomplishments will not keep Him, in His own language, from tearing

you in pieces when there is none to deliver—when we assure you, that, if you continue what nature made you, you continue a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction—when we bid your conscience answer us the question, whether, upon a review of what that is which chiefly engrosses your heart and animates your conduct and forms the ruling object of your most urgent and habitual desires, whether or not you may be said to live without God in the world—when the answer of conscience is, that, in thought and in affection, you are almost constantly away from God; and, while all alive to the impression of other things, you in reference to Him are a most blind and senseless and alienated creature—Then, surely, if the Bible be something more than the mockery of an imposition, and it tell us that all the nations that forget God shall be turned into hell, we, when pressing this upon you, are just endeavouring to alarm you out of your present situation—We are bringing the argument of terror to bear upon you, an argument which we believe to be most effectual with some minds—for it is to its operation that the apostle Jude seems to refer, when he says "some save with fear, pulling them out of the fire."

But there is another situation to which we are called upon to come over; and there is a free passage opened up to it; and when we move from the one situation to the other, we are relieved from the mighty burden of all that misery which originally weighed upon us. "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus"—these are the words which give us the delightful assurance, that,

while to all who are out of Christ the look of God is a look of severity; to all who are in Him it is a look of kindness—while from the one situation there is a fearful looking for of judgment; from the other there is a rejoicing hope of the glory of God—while in the one there is the helplessness of unaided nature, painfully striving after an obedience which it can never reach; in the other there is a supply of all that strength and spiritual nourishment, which are daily given to the daily prayers of believers—while in the one there is an obstinate forgetfulness of God, because He is shut out at every turn from the eye of the natural mind, still under the dominion of things seen and things temporal; there is in the other, a fond and a habitual recurrence of all our affections to Him. For by the renewing process which all who take the offer of the Gospel are made to undergo, the soul is made alive unto God. Love to Him becomes the aspiring principle of all its endeavours. Instead of that louring and suspicious distance at which we before stood from the God whom we had offended, we draw near with a confiding sense of our reconciliation; and our hearts know what it is to love Him who first loved us. Under the influence of these new principles, we are gradually formed after the image of Him who created us. We are made meet for that communion with Him, which sin had broken up. We are restored to a fitness for His society in heaven, and for all those holy exercises which form the pleasure and the employment of heaven's inhabitants. And surely we have completed the contrast between the two situations, when, for the

present darkness and sinfulness and gloomy apprehensions which hang over the one, we lay before you the progressive virtue and the triumphant prospects of the other. And, instead of your fear, we work upon another principle of your constitution, even your hope—when, in our attempts to cheer you forward to that ground which believers occupy, we lay before you their peace with God and progressive holiness here, and the splendours of their unfading immortality hereafter.

But this argument, though differing from the former, is not just the argument of our text. The goodness of the things to which you are invited is one thing. The good-will with which you are invited is another. It is the latter argument which we are at present called upon to address to you. What we offer to your notice is—not the happiness you will enjoy by the acceptance of the gospel call, but the kindness which prompts the call. There is no doubt a mighty effect upon some minds, in the displeasure of God manifested against all who refuse to obey the gospel of His Son; and knowing His terrors, it is our part to make use of them in the business of persuading men. But others again are more drawn by the cords of love; and the tender voice of a beseeching and inviting God, will sometimes soften that heart into acquiescence, which would have remained in shut and shielded obstinacy against all the severity of His threatenings. It is the desire of God after you—it is His compassionate longing to have back again to Himself, those sinful creatures who had wandered away from Him—it is His fatherly earnestness

to recall His strayed children—it is this, which, by moving and subduing the will of man, exemplifies the assertion of the apostle when he says—know ye not that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. And thus while Jude says of some in his general epistle, "these save with fear, pulling them out of the fire;" he says of others—"on them have compassion, making a difference."

In the farther prosecution of this discourse, we shall first say a few words on the principle of the gospel message—good-will—Secondly, on the object of the gospel message—men—it is a message of good-will to men—And thirdly, on the application of the gospel message to the men who now hear us.

When we say that God is actuated by a principle of good-will to you, it sounds in your ears a very simple proposition—easily uttered by the speaker, and as easily apprehended by the hearer. Yes! it is easy enough to reach the mere understanding of the hearer by such an announcement. But it is a work of greater difficulty than many of you have perhaps thought of, to win his confidence in its truth—to shake him out of his suspicions—to open his heart to a sense of God's graciousness, and God's willingness to take every sinner into acceptance. There is a barrier in these evil hearts of unbelief, against the admission of a filial confidence in God. We see no mildness in the aspect of the Deity. Our guilty fears suggest the apprehension of a stern and vindictive character. There is a veil which hides from the eye of flesh this greatest of spiritual Beings; and to our fancy there

lurk behind it, the undefined images of wrath and terror and severe majesty. It is not in the power of argument to do away this impression. It does not lie within the compass of strenuous asseveration to dislodge it. The minister may put forth all his eloquence, and tell you in tones as gentle as ever dropt from the lips of persuasion, that God is love; and that His every aspiration after His lost and fallen children is tenderness. He may melt, and soothe, and for a time compose your hearts by his winning assurances of God's good-will to you; and you may weep and wonder at your injurious sentiments of so good a Father. He may put the assertion into your mouth, that God wishes me well—but secretly you have other feelings of Him. Your mind recurs to its rooted and habitual jealousy of God. There lies a darkling cloud of suspicion over your every impression of the Deity. The earnest assurances of the preacher may disperse it for a moment; but his voice ceases and it again gathers over you. You leave the church, and you carry away with you a heart as uncheered as ever by the light of God's countenance. You recur for another week to your familiar employments, and your path in life is as unblest as ever by a sense of God's reconciled presence. There may be an occasional joy in these hearts of yours; but when we come to examine it, it is not joy in God. There may be all the repose of an undisturbed security in your minds; but it is not a security resting on a sentiment of conscious acceptance with God. It is joy in the creature. It is security in earthly things. It is the idolatry of a

heart, delighting itself with that which drives all painful and fatiguing thoughts of God away from it. The gay or peaceful tenor of your lives, is no evidence of trust on your part in the good-will or in the graciousness of God. It only proves how seldom you think of Him. When you do think of Him, it is not with the delighted confidence of children. There is a jealousy of God, which haunts you and hangs over you; and, to escape from the painfulness of this, do you take up with other things, to which the heart recurs with a readier and more habitual fondness. Could we succeed in obtaining for the lesson of our text, the full persuasion of your minds, it would not be so. If you saw the good-will of God, in all that kindly and endearing character which belongs to it, you would find a treasure in which you would greatly delight yourself. He would become that secure and joyful habitation to which you would resort continually. The heart would be taken up with Him, as its strength and its portion. Other things might pass at times before the attention, and be as much loved as not to impair the supremacy of the love of God over all your affections. But He would ever remain the object of the ruling desire, which filled and actuated your bosoms: And if we find that a desire after the creature, occupies that place within you which should be taken up by a desire after the Creator—then all the tranquillity of worldly men, and all the careless and animating gaiety which abounds among them, will not convince us that a peaceful confidence in the good-will of the divine Being, is the sentiment which they carry in their

hearts. O no! it is not because they think God to be their friend, that they move along so securely and so pleasantly. It is because they do not think of Him at all. It is because they find a sufficiency in the things of sight and of sense, which are around them; and they forget the unseen Being who formed all and who supports all. They have their treasure and their enjoyment on earth; and, as to the God who made it, they hate Him, they distrust Him, they are afraid of Him.

Now though we are persuaded, that a real belief, existing in the minds of these people, of God's undoubted good-will towards them, would have the effect of charming them away from the deceitful enjoyments of the world, and making them rest their enjoyment in the possession and in the service of God—yet it is not them we have chiefly in our eye, when we press in your hearing, the argument of our text. They are people of another temperament, whom we are adverting to—people who brood in anxiety over their chance of a higher interest than any that this world can offer—people who are smitten and softened, under a sense of unworthiness—people who walk in darkness and have no light, who cannot win the length of cheerful confidence in God, who long after a sense of His good-will but cannot obtain it; and who, so far from never thinking of Him, are much employed in pondering His ways, and who think of Him often, but do it with trembling and with much heaviness. We know that they will not be made to see God, in that aspect of graciousness which belongs to Him, till the power of a special revelation be made to rest upon

them—till God Himself who created light out of darkness shine in their hearts: But knowing also, that He makes use of the word as His instrument, it is our part to lay the assurances of that word, in all their truth and in all their tenderness before you. God swears by Himself, that He has no pleasure in your death. That He may prevail upon you to trust Him, He tries every expedient. He does all that tenderness can devise to remove your every suspicion; and to cheer you on to a confidence in His good-will. He pleads the matter with you. He beseeches you to accept of reconciliation at His hand. He offers it as a gift, and descends so far as to knock at the door of your hearts and to crave your acceptance of it. To do away the obstructions which lay in the road of access from a sinner to his offended God, He set up the costly apparatus of redemption. As the remission of sins without the shedding of blood is impossible, He cleared the way between Him and a guilty world of this mighty barrier. Rather than lose you for ever, He sent His Son to pour out His soul unto the death for you. And now that iniquity is put an end to—now that an everlasting righteousness is brought in—now that every attribute of His nature has been magnified by the great Sacrifice—now that the weight of that heavy burden, which restrained the expression of His good-will to the children of men, has been done away by Him who bore the chastisement of our peace—now that there is nothing to intercept the flow of friendship from God to man, does it come down free as the light of day and rich as the exuberance of heaven upon a despairing world.

II. We now proceed, in the second place, to the object of the gospel message—men—a message of good-will to men. We think that much is to be gathered, from the general and unrestricted way in which this object is stated. The announcement which was heard from the canopy of heaven, was not good-will to certain men to the exclusion of others. It is not an offer made to some, and kept back from the rest of the species. It is generally to man. The generality of the term tells us that no one individual needs to look upon himself, as shut out from the good-will of his Father in heaven. Let him be who he may, we cheer him on to confidence in God's good-will to him; and we do so purely and singly in virtue of his being a man. We see no exception in the text; and we make no exception from the pulpit. We find a general assurance in the word of God; and we cast it abroad among you, without reserve and without limitation. Where it is to light, and who the individual whose bosom it is to enter as the harbinger of peace we know not—but sure we are that it can never light wrong; and that wherever faith in God is formed, it is followed by the fulfilment of all His promises. We know well the scruples of the disconsolate; and with what success a perverse melancholy can devise and multiply its arguments for despair. But we will admit of none of them. We look at our text, and find that it recognises no outcast. By one comprehensive sweep, it takes in the whole race of man; and empowers the messenger of God, to ply with the assurances of His good-will, all the individuals of all its fami-

lies. We see that there is no straitening with God—that favour and forgiveness are ready to come down abundantly from Him upon every son and daughter of the species—that His mercy rejoices over all—and that in pouring it forth over the wide extent of a sinful creation, the unbelief of man is the only obstacle which it has to struggle with. Tell us not, in the obstinacy of your distrust, that you are such a sinner—all your sins, many and aggravated as they are, are the sins of a man. Tell us not of the malignity of your disease—it is the disease of a man. Tell us not of your being so grievous an offender that you are the very chief of them. Still you are a man. Christ knew what was in man; and He knew all the varieties of case and of character which belong to Him. And still there must be something in His gospel to meet all and to make up for all—for He impairs not by one single exception, the universality of the gospel message, which is good-will to man. We again lift in your hearing the widely sounding call. Look unto Him all ye ends of the earth and be saved. If the call be not listened to, it is not for want of kindness and freeness and honesty in the call—it is for want of confidence in the called. There is no straitening with God. It is all with yourselves. It lies in the cold and dark and narrow suspicions which stifle and fill up your own bosoms. The offer of God's good-will is through Christ Jesus, unto all and upon all them that believe. We want to lodge this offer in your hearts, and you will not let us. We want to woo you into confidence, but you remain sullen and inflexible.

We want to whisper peace to your souls; but you refuse the voice of the charmer, let him charm ever so wisely. We stand here as the ambassador of a beseeching God, and we are charged with His freest and kindest invitations to one and to all of you. We do not exceed our commission by a single inch, when we tell of God's good-will to you, and that nothing is awanting but your good-will towards God, that you may obtain peace and reconciliation and joy. All who will may come and drink of the waters of life freely. God fastens a mark of exclusion upon none of you. He bids us preach the gospel to every creature; and every creature who believes will be saved. He has no pleasure in any of your deaths. Believe and ye shall be saved. Draw near unto God and He will draw near unto you. Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? We speak in the very language of God, though we fall infinitely short of such a tone and of such a tenderness as He has over you. If you think otherwise of God, you do Him an injustice. You look at Him with the jaundiced eye of unbelief. You array Him in a darker shroud than belongs to Him. You mantle one of the attributes of the Divinity, from the view of your own mind. You withdraw your faith from His own declaration of His own name, as the Lord God merciful and gracious. Instead of yielding the homage of your confidence and your affection to the true God, you superstitiously tremble before a god of your own fancy. You put all the earnest and repeated assurances of God's actual revelation away from you; and nourish in your hearts such a cold and distant and timid apprehension of

the Deity, as, if persisted in, will land you in an inheritance among the unbelieving and the fearful.

And here the question occurs to us—how does the declaration of God's good-will in the text, consist with the entire and everlasting destruction of so many of the species? In point of fact, all men are not saved. We speak not of those who never heard of Jesus—for, instead of spending our strength in attempts to dissipate the obscurity which hangs over the hidden counsels of God, we want every thing we say to bear on the great object of a home and a practical application. But of those who have heard of the name of Jesus—how few alas find the way to life—how many are carried along the broad way that leadeth to destruction. How does the good-will of the text obtain accomplishment upon them; and in what way are they the objects of good-will, who eventually shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power? Understand then that the good-will of the text, consists, not in the actual bestowment of eternal life upon all in the next world; but in holding out, in this world, the gift of eternal life to the free and welcome acceptance of all. We hold out a gift to two people, which one of them may take and the other may refuse. The good-will in me which prompted the offer, was the same in reference to both. God in this sense willeth that all men shall be saved. We are doing His will, when we lay the gift of eternal life before each and all of you. Some may refuse to know God, and to obey the gospel of His Son; but this does not impair the frankness and the freeness

and the cordiality with which the gift is shown to all, and all are invited to take hold of it. Nay, the good-will of God to those who have rejected the salvation of the gospel, may look more conspicuous in the day of judgment, than His good-will to those who have received it. It might not be so, had He only issued one call—had He plied them with one invitation, and never repeated it. But He has done more than made one invitation. He has made it again and again. It has been repeated in a thousand forms. From the first moment that you understood your Bibles, you had the invitation. Every time you see the Bible, you may again have the invitation. Every time you read, "If any man is athirst let him come unto me and drink," you get another invitation. Every time you hear the minister faithfully expounding the oracles of God there is still another invitation: And will you deny the good-will of God to you at this moment—that He has brought you in life and listening around us—and to-day if ye will hear His voice you have another invitation. None of you have reason to complain of God. He is at this moment wiping His hands of you; and on the great theatre of judgment it will be made to appear, that there is no backwardness and no straitening on His part. The offer is not to this one man among you and to that other, to the exclusion of all the rest. It is to man in general; and if the word of salvation have reached you, the offer of salvation is made to you. To accept of that offer is to discern its reality —it is to put faith in the honesty and good-will with which it is laid before you—it is to trust in

the promise which is unto all and upon all who believe. In stating these matters we shall be as general in our address to the assembled multitude, as the apostle Peter was before us. He said repent every one of you—we say believe every one of you; and according to your faith so will it be done unto you. Be assured every one of you, that God has good-will towards each and towards all. There is no limitation with Him; and be not you limited by your own narrow and fearful and superstitious conceptions of Him.

III. But this leads us in the last place, to press home the lesson of the text, on you who are now sitting and listening around us. God, in the act of ushering the gospel into the world, declares good-will to man. He declares it therefore to you. You are not excluded from this general declaration. To you the word of salvation has come, for we are now addressing it to you—and we call you to give way to the impressive consideration, of a God beseeching you to be reconciled—a God who intends your benefit—a God who professes Himself to be actuated by good-will to one and to all of you. You have read in a book of voyages, of the many expedients which are tried to gain the confidence of the natives in a before undiscovered country; and how mortifying it is, when every demonstration of good-will is misunderstood or resisted. They had never seen such a ship—they had never beheld such a people—and, kept back by terror, every attempt to woo their approach is in vain exhausted upon them. Would they only stand to receive our gifts,

or to hear our assurances of kindness, we might soon ingratiate ourselves into their confidence. But no! they run to their woods or to their lurking holes; and it is not till after many signs of invitation have been rejected—after many attempts to gain their confidence have proved ineffectual—after many expedients for bringing round a friendly intercourse with the natives have turned out to be fruitless and unavailing—It is not till after many repeated experiments of this kind, that the inhabitants begin at length to receive their favours—to put faith in the professions of the strangers—and to rejoice in the assurance of their benevolence and good-will. Now, the rest of the world is not more strange to an undiscovered island, than Paradise and the beings who inhabit it are strange to the men of this sinful and banished world. The great errand from heaven to earth, of which the records have come down to us, was, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. It was altogether, if we may be allowed the expression, a voyage of benevolence—but this did not hinder the very first appearance of the heavenly visitors, from exciting the fears of weak and guilty and alienated man. When the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds, they were sore afraid—but they could not fly from his presence, and this gave him an advantage. He could talk to them. He could cheer them into confidence. He could force them to hear him, when he said—"fear not for I bring you glad tidings of great joy." He could act as a messenger of kindness, to prepare them for the more numerous host of visitors who were to follow—nor do we read

of their being at all startled or dismayed, when this host joined the angel, and the whole multitude of them praised God, and said, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and good-will to men. Their confidence was now gained. They gave up those fears and apprehensions which stood in the way of their faith; and we afterwards read of their glorifying and praising God, for all the things that they had heard and seen.

Now, you are liable to the same fears with these shepherds. You are guilty; and to you belong all the weakness, and all the timidity of guilt. The idea of God is apt to send terror into your hearts; and though we come over you, and over you again, with the assurance of God being gracious, of God being willing to take you all back again unto Himself, of God pressing your return with every offer of friendship and every feeling of tenderness—these fears are apt to stick to you—you cannot summon up confidence; and, in spite of the most solemn and earnest and repeated assurances of your Bible and your minister, you still keep away from God. Now tell us are these misgivings at all reasonable? Do they not carry in them a most injurious reflection against God? Do they not evince a higher respect for your own fears and your own fancies of Him, than for the account of His own messengers, who came upon His errand, and left the presence of His glory, and appeared in the air to the shepherds at Bethlehem? Whatever be the dark and mysterious colouring of that imaginary veil, which hides the Deity from your observation—be assured that good-will is the real feeling which belongs to

Him. Surely this is as kind a term as you can possibly wish. It carries every expression of endearment and cordiality along with it; and, try what we may, we could not devise another, more fitted to chase away your every fear, and to gain your whole confidence, and to cheer you amid all the vicissitudes of your life and all the terrors of your fancy. And, when like to lose the comfort of faith, we know no one expression, which, when summoned up to the memory, and dwelt upon with perseverance, and determinedly held by amid all the darknesses and discomforts which meet the heart in the multitude of its thoughts, is more fitted than the single expression of good-will, to restore light to my soul and make me say why art thou disquieted within me?

By bringing your minds to the delightful confidence, which a belief in the truth of all this is fitted to inspire, you are exercising that very faith with which God is well pleased. You cease from affronting Him by your suspicions. You do honour to His testimony. You set to your seal that God is true. He no longer grieves for the hardness of your hearts, when they give up their resistance to the impressive consideration of His good-will to you; and to the affecting proofs of this good-will, in His Son suffering for you, His Son dying for you, His Son bearing for your sakes a load of mysterious agony, and pouring out the blood of atonement to wash you from the guilt and the pollution of all your iniquities. We have experienced long enough the utter powerlessness of all human argument, to think that what we have said will open a way to

your hearts, unless the Spirit interpose, and give His efficacy to the testimony of Christ's sufferings and death. He can melt you. He can compel you to listen and to believe. He can make you feel the burden of those hateful sins by which you are encompassed. He can point your eye to the Saviour, that best pledge and evidence of God's good-will to you; and make you exclaim with joyful confidence, I have been in quest of a remedy, and here at length have I found it. Cherish no doubt as to its efficacy. Have your eye opened to the freeness of the offer, and to the value of the thing offered. If the power of God's grace go along with the utterance of our direction—then He is doing by an instrument, what He is able to do without one—He is working faith in you with power—He is lifting that veil, which keeps out the entrance of the glorious gospel, from the minds of those who are blinded by the god of this world—He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, is shining in your heart; to give you the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

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